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David Holmes, Jr.

THIRD THOUSAND.

THE METHODIST PREACHER;

CONTAINING

TWENTY-EIGHT SERMONS,

ON

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY

BISHOP HEDDING, DR. FISK, DR. BANGS, DR. DURBIN,

AND OTHER MINISTERS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

NEW YORK:
C. M. SAXTON, 25 PARK ROW.
1859.

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INTRODUCTION.

"THE Bible, the Bible, sir," said Chillingworth, "is the religion of protestants." This is a most important truth, beautifully and forcibly expressed, and worthy to be reiterated from every pulpit in Christendom.

The fifth article of religion in the discipline of the M. E. Church, reads as follows: "The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

This acknowledges the Bible alone as the authoritative standard in doctrine, experience, discipline, and practice. The Popish and semi-Popish notion, that the Bible is not sufficient, taken alone, is discarded as unworthy a place in a Christian creed, and a virtual denial of the authority of Revelation. Tradition, however important as a portion of church history, has neither a co-ordinate or subordinate authority, in anything essential in the doctrine and government of the Church.

What may have been said by Fathers, Popes, or Councils, is of very little consequence, unless confirmed by Holy Scripture, notwithstanding their self-claimed infallibility. The Bible is more ancient than fathers, more wise than councils, and more infallible than Popes. It is the exact and perfect standard of truth; the unerring wisdom of God. Our religious views and practices are neither true nor useful, unless moulded and directed by its divine teachings, and moral power. The theology of Wesley, and of those who have rallied under the standard which he raised, and have taken their place in the great family of protestant denominations, has ever been distinguished for its pure Scriptural character. "To the law and the testimony," has ever been their motto. "If any man speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in him." Luther was educated according to the regimen of the Catholic Church, but he never would have been moved to action as a reformer, without access to the Scriptures. Wesley received his training in the university of Oxford, according to the most approved plan of manufacturing ministers for the establishment. He would have been an eminent man, if he had never become a Master in Israel. He would most likely have been distinguished for his scholastic attainments, philosophic wisdom, and classical taste in any event; but it was the Bible that made him what he was as a minister. This made the doctrines and facts of Christianity appear to him, other than mere speculations—it transformed them into living and momentous realities—moulded his opinions, changed his

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heart, filled him with the constraining love of Christ, and inspired him with a useful, commendable, and holy enthusiasm—an element of character, essential to the success of those who seek the good of their race, by waging war with the stupendous evils which degrade and oppress humanity. "I am," says he, "a spirit come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came down from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be '*homo unius libri.*'"

It is the appropriate business of the ambassador of Christ to persuade men to be reconciled to God. This is done by announcing the Gospel, explaining the terms of salvation, and displaying the motives God has revealed to awaken concern and enforce attention to the subject. And he is the best minister who executes his commission with the greatest success. The reputation of the ambassador or diplomatist is not determined by acquaintance with court etiquette, education, or philosophy, but by the success with which he maintains the honor, and secures the interests of his government in his negotiations with foreign nations. And so, it is not rare intellectual endowments, ripe scholarship, or profound philosophy that makes the minister of Jesus Christ: these sanctified and properly applied, are of incalculable advantage to the general purposes of the ministry; but without the divine call, and constraining love of Christ, his character as a minister is radically defective. He lacks the spirit of Christ—has no sympathy with him in his mission and work, and hence cannot successfully negotiate the matchless interests pending between earth and heaven.

The ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church have as high an appreciation of sound learning as any other body of men, though were their claims tested by their actual attainments, in letters and scholastic divinity, they might as a general thing be obliged to yield the palm to others. Yet the disparity, if any exists, is much less than it was, and is constantly diminishing. The Church is rapidly increasing, and perfecting her facilities for imparting a systematic and thorough education: particularly is she *now* displaying a commendable zeal that her ministry may possess intellectually, morally, and practically, every qualification deemed essential to success. A large class of them possess these advantages already, and the time is very near, when as a whole, they will rank as high in all these respects, as those of any other denomination of Christendom. They do not, however, stake their character and reputation as ministers on their learning, and would not, were it much greater than it is. They would rather be found crying out with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The worldly and time-serving, have been scarcely less puzzled to account for the remarkable success of Methodist ministers, than the Philis-

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tines were to ascertain wherein lay the great strength of Samson But with a common share of spiritual discernment and practical sense, the question is of easy solution.

1. They acknowledge a divine call, and act under the conviction that God has imposed on them the obligations of a gospel minister. They do not enter the ministry as men enter other professions; as a matter of taste or convenience, or as a means of acquiring wealth, and enjoying facilities for securing political influence and power. That their commission is from the court of heaven, and that the salvation or perdition of deathless souls depends under God upon the manner in which they fulfil the duties of their holy office, are to them solemn and momentous truths. With these views, minds rightly constituted cannot act without an honesty and integrity of purpose commensurate with the high claims of God and duty. To such, lukewarmness, worldly prudence, and timidity appear wholly out of place. Feeling that the vows of God are upon them, and that they have to do with eternal realities, the whole soul is thrown into the subject.

2. As their commission is divine, so is their message. They do not entertain their hearers with the philosophy of the schools, nor substitute the inventions of men for the words of inspired wisdom. Their doctrines and motives are drawn directly from the Scriptures. Their theme is the Gospel, plainly stated in its facts, doctrines, provisions, and results. The Bible is their text-book, and they feel bound to keep within the record. They find no liberty to dilute the truth, or soften its severity, to render it more acceptable. Preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, with all honesty, "whether men will hear or whether they will forbear," it becomes by the blessing of God, "the power of God unto salvation."

3. Add to this a knowledge of human nature, a practical wisdom acquired by intercourse with men in all relations and conditions, a versatility of talent and power of adaptation, aided, if not created by the nature of their duties, and the adopted method of performing them—but above all, the blessing of God upon their honest, zealous, and persevering efforts to glorify Him, and save immortal souls, and we have facts enough to explain whatever may have appeared mysterious or remarkable in the fruits of their labors. These views and feelings make their ministrations directly practical. Believing with all the heart in a *free, full,* and *present* salvation, they look for immediate results, and are not disappointed. These endowments are not the exclusive property of Methodist ministers, they are open to all who are designated by the Holy Spirit to the office and work of the holy ministry, and whenever possessed and rightly applied, they are attended by the same demonstrations of the saving power of God.

This volume contains twenty-eight sermons, by twenty-three different ministers. The subjects discussed are the most important within the range of Bible theology, and presented with an ability, clearness and force, rarely equalled. They combine simplicity, dignity, variety, and unity. The simplicity and dignity are in the style, and unostentatious independence of thought; the variety in the character of the

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subjects (each differing from all the rest), and the diversity of talent and manner displayed in their composition—and the unity in the source whence they derive their materials, the correspondence of doctrine, spirit, and design.

The Rev. gentlemen whose names are connected with the following discourses, are among the most eminent ministers of the church, living or dead. There is only a single name that we could wish might be removed from the list.* The name of Wilbur Fisk stands first, and he deservedly occupied the first rank among the lights of his church during the last years of his eminently useful life. He first gave character and enterprise to the educational interests of his denomination, and has left to the church a reputation full of honor, and spiritual fragrance. Next comes Enoch Mudge, the "first native Methodist preacher of New England." Then the venerable Dr. Nathan Bangs, eminently worthy to be classed with the Apostles of American Methodism; he has by his pen, his pulpit labors, and personal influence, done more to promote the growth and prosperity of the church of his choice, than any other living man. Richard Watson, the profound theologian of the English Conference, is also in the catalogue, together with the Right Rev. Father in God, Elijah Hedding, D. D., late senior Bishop of the M. E. Church. The latter combined in his character, the cultivation of the scholar, the wisdom of the philosopher, the dignity of the Christian gentleman, and the simplicity of the child. His memory is like ointment poured forth.

But time and space would fail me to speak according to their merits, of Durbin, and Levings, and Spicer, and Sandford, and others whose names are found in this list, some of whom have passed away to their reward in heaven, while others are obtaining honorable distinction in the spiritual contests of Zion. The reference we have made to them is enough. The purchaser of this book will possess some of the best sermons printed in the English language, and may at his leisure converse with, and weigh the words of piety and wisdom which have dropped from the lips of more than a score of the best ministers of the age.

D. Holmes.

Auburn, April 29th, 1852.

*Leroy Sunderland.

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SERMON I.

BY REV. WILLBUR FISK, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

THE PROPERTIES OF THE LAW AND GOSPEL DISTINGUISHED.

ROMANS, VIII. 2, 3, 4.

FOR THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE, IN CHRIST JESUS, HATH MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.

FOR WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO, IN THAT IT WAS WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH, GOD, SENDING HIS OWN SON, IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, AND FOR SIN, CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH:

THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

ONE leading design of the apostle, in this epistle to the Romans, seems to be, to show the distinctive and relative properties and offices of the law and the gospel,* and the relation man stands in to both. This subject he has touched with the hand of a master, and has reasoned upon it with clearness and precision. He has not ornamented it with the flowers of rhetoric, for it needed no such ornaments. He was speaking of the deep things of God, and describing the great mystery of godliness; and into this subject he threw all the energies of his own mighty mind, guided and aided by the inspiration of the Highest. Aside from immediate inspiration, no one could be better prepared to discuss this subject than the apostle Paul. The law had been his study from his earliest youth; and his history and writings afford abundant evidence that he had not studied it merely as a science, but he had carefully observed it as his soul's only hope of eter-

* The term *gospel*, in this discourse, is used, not merely in its primary signification, as the "glad tidings" or "good message" of salvation by Jesus Christ; but also as a *proper name* of this system of grace. In this latter sense it is very generally used by theological writers, and in the New Testament. In close connection with this latter sense, the term is also used as expressive of that *gracious influence*, and that *divine and energetic operation*, which frees the sinner from the condemnation of the law, and from the guilt and power of sin. In this we are sustained by the text and context, which teach that "the law of the spirit of life" frees the sinner from condemnation and "from the law of sin and death." So also this same apostle, chap. i. 16, assures us that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth." And again, 1 Thess. i. 5: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." See also 1 Cor. iv. 20, and other passages.

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nal life. He made his boast of the righteousness of the law, and had strong confidence that, in doing these things, he should live by them. For he was alive without the law, that is, without a knowledge of its strict and deep requirements, *once:* but when the commandment came, when the purity and extent of the law were revealed, sin revived, and he died. Still he clings to the law for salvation, and struggles hard and long to meet its claims. But every effort is fruitless—every new discovery of the nature of the law convinces him but the more of its insufficiency to save him. Every fresh corruscation of its threatenings reveals but the more clearly the wretchedness and hopelessness of his condition. At length deliverance comes, not from the law, but from the gospel; and in the possession of this deliverance, he has an equal opportunity to test the character of the gospel, as he had before to become acquainted with the character of the law. With all this light and feeling, derived from deep research and thorough experience, and the whole aided by inspiration, he enters upon an elucidation of this subject; and after describing the particular offices of both the law and the gospel, and their effects upon the heart, in the progress of a thorough conviction for sin, and a sound conversion by grace, he embodies the whole in the verses of our text: "For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

To notice some of these distinct properties of the law and gospel, as exhibited by the apostle, is the object of the present discourse.

I. THE LAW IS WEAK TO SAVE THE SINNER, BUT STRONG TO CONDEMN; WHEREAS, THE GOSPEL IS WEAK TO CONDEMN THE SINNER, BUT STRONG TO SAVE.

"The law," saith the text, "was weak through the flesh," and therefore could not save. By the prevalence of the fleshly nature, which was contrary to the righteousness required by the law, and which rendered the sinner obnoxious to its penalties, the whole weight of the law was turned against the transgressor. This is implied in the very nature of law, which is "a rule of conduct prescribed by proper authority, and enforced by suitable sanctions." Hence its sole office is to prescribe what is right to be done, and to threaten and punish the delinquent. If to this we add, what perhaps is also implied, that it secures safety and protection to such as, by perfect and perpetual obedience, fulfil its requirements, we shall have all that is, or can be, included in a proper definition of law. But here is not the shadow of a provision of mercy to the offender. Since, there-

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fore, the law of God is as immutable as his throne, and as irresistible as his omnipotence, there is nothing that can wrest from its strong protection the perfectly obedient; and there is nothing short of an honorable satisfaction, that can deliver the guilty offender from its awful penalty. Hence our apostle says, he found "the commandment which was ordained unto life," to be unto death, and the curse and the wrath of God, which rested upon all men who continued not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them, rested on him; and there was no provision for escape. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the effects of sin, the Son of God did, by becoming a *sin-offering*, that he might redeem them that were under the law, and rescue, from its strong arm, the miserable offender.

And this is the peculiar province of the gospel. The Saviour declares, that "he came not to condemn the world:" and why should he? the *law* was sufficient for this. To suppose otherwise, would be to suppose that the law does not take cognizance of all sin, or that its penalty was not commensurate with the demerit of sin; either of which would be contrary to its perfect character; for the "law is holy, just and good." There was no necessity, therefore, that a new dispensation should be introduced, either as a rule of life, or as a principle of condemnation. In these respects the law needed no aid. And as man was condemned already, and the wrath of God rested upon him, if any more was done in his case, it should be of an entirely different character. And so the gospel system is represented; for when Christ came to establish it, he "came to seek and to save that which was lost"—he came that men "might have life"—"to justify the ungodly." In short, he came to do *what the law could not do*. The law could, and did, prescribe a perfect rule, and therefore the gospel came not to do that. The law could, and did, threaten and condemn the sinner, and therefore the gospel came not for that. But the law could not save sinners; and therefore, to accomplish this work, God sent his own Son for a sin-offering. And here the peculiar office and energy of the gospel is seen. As the law did not need the aid of the gospel to condemn the sinner, so the gospel needed not the aid of the law to justify the sinner. The one brings terror enough, and therefore the other brings none. The former brings no salvation, and therefore the latter is a system of salvation throughout. Hence, to the sinner, the one is a ministration of wrath and of death, and the other is a ministration of mercy and of life. It is granted, that the gospel is called a savor of death unto some; but this implies, simply, that it is an occasion of aggravated condemnation to those who abuse it. For the law requires that mercies received should be gratefully improved; and the greater the mercy,

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greater the condemnation for its abuse. Not that the abused *mercies* are charged with wrath, against the ungrateful sinner; but the law necessarily, and of its own nature, takes cognizance of offences against the provisions of mercy, as well as of those against the requirements of justice. Hence it is through the strong and condemning power of the law, even in this case, that the gospel of the grace of God becomes a savor of death to those who reject it. And even to such, while their probation lasts, the gospel holds out the means of salvation still; and strong as the law is to condemn, yet, to all who will receive it, the gospel is stronger to save. It silences the thunders of Sinai,—it turns aside the vindictive sword of justice,—it breaks open the prison house of the sinner, and lifts him up from the pit of ruin. For "Christ is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God through him."

II. THE LAW ARRESTS, CONDEMNS, AND DESTROYS THE SINNER; BUT THE GOSPEL ARRESTS, CONDEMNS, AND DESTROYS SIN.

So far is the law from destroying sin, it occasions its existence, and increases its strength. So it was understood by the author of our text. For he not only asserts that "where there is no law there is no transgression," and that he "had not known sin but by the law," and "had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" but he also states, that "the motions of sins were by the law," and that "sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in him all manner of concupiscence." For, "without the law, sin was dead:" and he "was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." And the more clearly he saw the true character of the law, the more he groaned under its condemning power, and the more sensibly he felt the burden and guilt of sin. Hence he cries out, almost in despair, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

It was now that deliverance came from Christ—"I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord,"—for now "the law of the spirit of life," that is, the power of the life-giving gospel, ministered by the Holy Spirit, "made him free from the law of sin and death." Perhaps, in the whole book of God, there is not a more striking representation of the distinct and opposite offices of the law and gospel than is here presented. The law, by reason of the power and guilt of sin, was goading and pressing the sinner down to death and hell. "For the sting of death is sin; and the *strength of sin is the law*." But the gospel, not by destroying the law, but by destroying that through which the law could inflict any penalty upon the sinner, "by destroying sin in the flesh," by removing its guilt and destroying its power, raised the sinking sinner up again to heaven. Now, therefore, is he delivered from the law, that being

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dead wherein he was held. With this view of the subject, accords that highly acceptable saying of another apostle—"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." With this agrees the whole tenor of the gospel. Let us ask ourselves the following questions: What was the object of Christ's coming into the world—of his preaching, and of his death? Why did he send the Holy Spirit? Why did he commission the apostles and their successors to preach the gospel? In short, What did the gospel make provision for? Why is it called gospel? Why is it called grace? The answer is at hand. Man was condemned by a perfect law, and was perishing without hope under its curse. Christ came to justify him—he came for a *sin-offering*, that he might "*condemn sin in the flesh.*"

III. THE LAW IS A RULE OF LIFE FOR THE HOLY; THE GOSPEL IS A PROVISION OF LIFE FOR THE UNHOLY.

That the law is a rule of life for the holy, is evident from its original reference to man, as he came pure from the hands of his Maker. This perfect rule is still binding, demanding a holy heart, and a holy life, and threatening sinners, because they are unholy, with the penalty of its curse. This is evident from the immutable nature of the law, which forbids the idea of a repeal; and also from the fact, that its binding precepts and awful penalties are clearly interwoven with the whole of divine revelation. This is further proved from the consideration, that, under a sense of the purity and penalty of this law, every awakened sinner stands self condemned, and groans and trembles till he is conscious of salvation, by the provisions of the gospel. Such are the exercises described by the apostle. "I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." For "by the law is the knowledge of sin." The soul is conscious of the claims of this law, and acknowledges that "it is holy, just and good," in all its demands, and in all it threatens. And it is the consciousness that he has broken the law, which presses down the awakened penitent under an insupportable weight of sin and guilt. He makes repeated efforts to observe its righteous requirements—but in vain—"when he would do good, evi is present with him." "For the good that he would, he does not, and the evil which he would not, that he does." And for this plain reason—the law is holy, in its character and requirements, but "*he* is carnal, sold under sin." Thus we see the law is a rule of life for the holy; but as the whole human family have fallen from holiness they are all by nature children of wrath, and, unassisted, must perish without hope. What then can be done? Shall the law be changed? It was perfect at the first, and any change would make it imperfect. A less perfect law God could not prescribe. But the sinner, as we

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have already seen, cannot keep this law. He is under its curse for past deficiencies, and he has no ability to meet its present and future requirements. There is now, therefore, no remedy but by satisfying justice, in an adequate and honorable way, for past offences, and making provision for fulfilling the law, in its future claims for obedience. Both of these objects are secured by the gospel. "Jesus Christ died for our offences, and rose again for our justification." "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." So that, now, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" for past offences, "for the law of the spirit of life"—*the gospel*—has made them free; and all this, because "God hath sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh, *for sin*," that is, as an expiation for sin, or, as it might be rendered, "for a sin-offering." So much is done to justify from the guilt of past offences; but the work and design of the gospel stops not here. It has made provision also, that THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US. This is an important saying, and worthy of all acceptation. *The law of the Spirit of life* is given, not that the law might be repealed, not that its claims should be lowered down, or its requisitions dispensed with; but that its righteousness might be fulfilled IN US, by a holiness of walk, after the Spirit and not after the flesh. *Let him that readeth, understand.* The gospel embraces, in its extensive provisions, all the righteousness of the law; and points out a practicable way on new and feasible conditions, by which its precepts can be kept. These provisions come down to man's weakness; they write the law upon the heart, and print it upon the inward parts, "that we, being delivered from our enemies, may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life."

IV. THE LAW DEPRIVES THE SINNER OF THE POWER AND MEANS OF REPENTANCE; THE GOSPEL SUPPLIES BOTH.

The penalty of the law is death. This implies something more than the mortality and subsequent death of the body; it includes also spiritual death. All who transgress this law become dead in trespasses and sins. This death utterly disqualifies the sinner for any acceptable moral exercise. The moral powers are weakened; the moral sense is benumbed, the mind is darkened, and all relish for the things of God, and all desire to enjoy God, are lost. The more the sinner therefore needs repentance, the more disinclined he is to repent; the more he needs mercy, the less he realizes his need, and the less he feels disposed to humble himself to obtain it. And not only is the power of repentance removed, by the operations of sin through the law, but all means of salvation are removed from the reach of the sinner. As the cherubim and flaming sword were placed to guard the way of the tree of life, and turned every way to

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cut off all approach by sinful man, so all sinners are shut out from the means of eternal life, and the flaming penalty of the law turns every way, to cut them off from hope. This is the nature of law. And until a law can be found, the violation of which does not induce moral corruption upon the soul, none can be found, but such as takes away both the means and disposition to repent, whenever it is transgressed. In short, until a law can be found which holds out as its sanctions, the hope of mercy and promise of pardon to the transgressor, none can be found that supplies the means or the opportunity for repentance. Such a law, it is presumed, never did exist, and, while the meaning of the term continues what it now is, it never can. Such a law would be no law; it would have none of the binding nature of law; its penalty would not be a curse, but a blessing. It would warn the subject of the law not to transgress, on pain of having the opportunity and means furnished him, by the very law he violates, for repentance and forgiveness. Such ludicrous enactments never disgraced the divine code. God's law threatens the transgressor with a stern and an inflexible curse; and at the same time assures him, that "he that offends in one point is guilty of all;" because he thus spreads moral corruption over his soul, and manifests the very spirit of rebellion against the King of Heaven. In this situation, what shall the sinner do? There is no help in the law, for that worketh wrath. Shall he be put under a milder law? The transgression of any law worketh death; for the wages of sin is death. Hence, to obtain salvation, the sinner wants not another law. A thousand *laws*, properly so called, would not help his case. He wants something to open the door for repentance; something to enlighten his dark mind, to quicken his benumbed powers, and strengthen his weakness. This is all found in the gospel. The gospel may be considered as affording the opportunity and means for repentance,

1. *By giving a day of probation to sinners.* This, as it relates to Adam's posterity, is implied in their personal existence, which they, doubtless, would not have had without this provision. The curse of the law would have taken them off in their federal head, and in their seminal existence, but for the intervention of the gospel. This existence, therefore, was granted to the race of Adam, in view of a state of probation and second trial, in which man might apply to God, through Christ, and be saved.

2. *With this probation, light, strength and grace were provided*, so that now the sinner sees and feels his sinfulness and danger. He also sees the way of escape, and has strength and a gracious influence granted him, that he may escape. It is this gospel grace through Christ, that constitutes fallen man a free moral agent, and restores to him the power of choice, which he lost through sin, and thus lays the foundation for all the commands, invitations and directions that are given to the sinner. Whatever sinners, therefore, are required

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to do, the gospel furnishes them with ability, and with all necessary helps to perform. "For he that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not with him also freely give us all things?"

3. *Finally, when the sinner, by the grace afforded him, submits to the righteousness of God in Christ, and receives the benefits of the atonement, "the law of the Spirit of life,"—the controlling influence of the gospel,—ministered by the Holy Ghost, sets him free from the thraldom of his own corrupt nature, begets him again unto a lively hope, and renews him "in knowledge, after the image of him that created him, in righteousness and true holiness."*

The law, therefore, through sin, takes away from the transgressor the power and the means to choose good, and destroys all desire for the enjoyment of God; but the gospel restores that power, furnishes those means, and begets that desire in the soul. The one separates the transgressor from all medium of access to his Creator; but the other brings him nigh, and enables him to "come with boldness to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

V. BY THE POWER OF THE LAW, THROUGH TRANSGRESSION, ALL THE BLESSINGS OF LIFE ARE CHANGED INTO CURSES; BUT BY THE GOSPEL, THEY ARE AGAIN TRANSFORMED INTO BLESSINGS.

Since sin entered into the world, the whole constitution of the natural as well as the moral world is changed. The earth is cultivated by toil and the sweat of the brow, and, even then, it bringeth forth thorns and thistles. Life is fraught with afflictions and pains. To this subject the apostle has made an allusion, in the same chapter with our text, and that, too, for the purpose of showing the opposite and glorious effects of the gospel, on a sinful world. For while "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," and even the children of God, "who have the first fruits of the Spirit," are subject to these sufferings, yet, through the power of the gospel, "all things work together for good to them that love God:" and therefore, in all these sufferings and natural evils, they are *more* than conquerors. The labors, the sweat, the pains and tears, and dying pangs, all of which are included in the curse of the law, are, through the grace of the gospel, made to subserve the interests of the soul, and enhance the felicities of the redeemed. Though through sin, the strength of which is the law, a blooming paradise has been transformed into a gloomy and a toilsome vale of thorns, and thistles, and chilling winds, and blasting mildews, yet the gospel more than brings back the forfeited Eden. It breathes a freshness upon the works of nature, and causes all life's afflictive scenes to hasten the soul onward and upward to a higher and a surer paradise. Yea, though the law threatens death to the body, as well as soul, and actually chains

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down this mortal system in the dark and gloomy prison-house, yet "he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken these mortal bodies," and give the triumphant song—"O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, *the strength of sin is the law;* but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, *through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

VI. THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL MAY BE FURTHER CONTRASTED, IN THAT THE LAW, FOR ONE OFFENCE, CONSIGNS THE SINNER TO DEATH AS CERTAINLY AS IF HE HAD BEEN GUILTY OF ALL; BUT THE GOSPEL, THROUGH ONE ACT OF FAITH, FREES THE SINNER FROM ALL OFFENCES, AS ENTIRELY AS IF HE HAD BEEN GUILTY OF NONE.

We are taught by inspiration, that, in a certain sense, "he who offends in one point is guilty of all." This arises out of the very nature of sin. For in whatever form it presents itself, it is high treason against the Sovereign of the universe, and therefore contains, in itself, the very essence of all sin. Against such a rebel the law is armed. He is arraigned by its righteous requisitions; he is condemned by its just and inflexible principles; he is cursed by its awful penalties. Though, if it were possible, he should commit no more sin, still he is condemned. But he will commit more; the depravity which one offence brings in, is the forerunner of a legion. The heart becomes sinful in all its exercises, and the life is a continued course of rebellious acts. Thus, therefore, *he is guilty of all*—not only because by one offence he embraces the very essence of all sin, which is rebellion against God, but also, because he is thereby disabled, in future, from keeping any of the law, in the spirit of its requirements; and his heart becomes the seat of every unholy principle and passion. From all this guilt, and from this wretched condition, the gospel proposes to deliver the sinner; and that, too, by one act of faith. This is expressed by our apostle in the context, by being *in Christ Jesus.* And it is the universal doctrine of the New Testament, that we are *in Christ*, that is, are made partakers of his nature and grace, by faith—that we are justified, sanctified and saved by faith. The necessary and important provisions, spoken of in the fourth division of this discourse, being made, and the mind being enlightened and aided by divine truth and grace, through the Spirit, nothing remains for the justification of the soul, but an exercise of faith in Christ. This subject of justification by faith, the apostle had treated at large, in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of this epistle, and, therefore, needed not here to go into a detail of the nature and progress of this work. But he would undoubtedly have us understand, that the deliverance, of which he is here speaking, was obtained in the same manner, and was indeed the very same, as that

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described chap. v. 1, &c.—"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." He had, before this, laid down and defended the doctrine of justification by faith, and in the verses just quoted, describes the blessing itself. But in connection with our text, he describes the exercises of the mind, preparatory to this blessing, and then the blessing itself. But in both of these, it seems to be implied, that there was one particular moment, and one particular exercise, in which the soul was made a partaker of this grace. That exercise was the exercise of faith; and that moment was the one in which the soul believed. That the soul is delivered from the penalty of the law is evident, because the apostle says, *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus—they are made free from the law of sin and death.* And that the soul is now prepared, by this change, to keep the law, is also evident, because the very design is, *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.* The sum of all is—the law brings condemnation, the gospel justification—the former condemns for one offence, the latter justifies through one act of faith; by one offence under the law, a door is opened for universal corruption; by one act of faith under the gospel, a foundation is laid for the fulfilment of all righteousness. The change, in one case, is a sudden transition from holiness and happiness, into guilt and ruin; but in the other case, it is a sudden restoration from guilt and ruin to justification and salvation. This, therefore, is what we mean when we say, *the law for one offence consigns the sinner to death as certainly as if he had been guilty of all: but the gospel, through one act of faith, frees the sinner from all offences, as entirely as if he had been guilty of none.* "For the judgment was *by one* to condemnation; but the free gift is of *many offences* unto justification."

In view of the foregoing doctrine, two or three reflections naturally arise.

1. *The gospel implies the law, and acknowledges its claims—they harmonize together in their general design, but are altogether distinct in their character and offices.*

That the gospel presupposes the law, is evident from the fact already established—that it is an expedient to meet both its penal and preceptive claims. But for the law, therefore, there would have been no gospel. Hence, when the gospel comes, proclaiming salvation, it always directs the sinner to the purity and rigor of the law; it clears his spiritual vision, that he may see his danger, and quickens his moral sensibilities, that he may feel his guilt. The gospel detracts nothing from the extent of these claims, and pleads nothing in extenuation of the sinner's criminality. But while it gives full credit to the demands

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of the law, it spreads open its own appropriate provisions, to meet these demands. It points the sinner, first to his poverty, and then to the "riches of grace, in Christ Jesus;" first to his moral defilement, and then to the blood that "cleanseth from all sin." Both, therefore, have the same object in view, namely, holiness of heart and life. The difference is in the manner of accomplishing this object. And this grows out of the different conditions of man. The law is suited, not only as a rule of conduct, but as a condition of life, for the holy; but the gospel is designed, as we have seen, as a provision of life for the unholy. While the law, therefore, curses sinners, the gospel blesses them. If the law could bless sinners, there would be no need of the gospel; and if the gospel could curse sinners, then indeed we might dispense with the law. But as the law preceded the gospel, and contains in itself all that was necessary as a rule of life, and all the penalty necessary to punish the transgressor, and, as has been shown, is unrepealed and unrepealable, there was no need of additional penalties and new moral codes, in the gospel. Therefore the gospel, strictly speaking, is not law. It may, indeed, be objected to this, that the gospel is sometimes called law in the scriptures. Our text calls it "the law of the spirit of life." St. James speaks of "the perfect law of liberty." St. Paul calls it "the law of faith"—and declares, Rom. ii. 12, 16, that "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel," and that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. i. 8. In reference to these and similar passages, it may be remarked, that so far as the gospel is used as a term to convey the idea of the whole divine administration, under the new covenant, it may very properly be said to include both the precepts and sanctions of law. And so the Scriptures sometimes use the term. But this is a mode of speech in which a part is put for the whole: the whole system is spoken of under the name of one of its prominent features. So the biography of Christ, and all the incidents recorded by the evangelists, go under the general name of *gospel*, because their leading object is to proclaim the "*good news* of great joy, which shall be unto all people," namely, that "unto them is born a SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord." It should also be recollected, that the gospel, as has been already shown, implies the law; and to preach it, therefore, with effect, it is necessary to proclaim the law, in all its terrors, and describe it in all its claims. Hence the apostolic commission runs thus—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved he that believeth not shall be damned." The gospel is as active in pressing the sinner's danger upon him, as it is in holding up its own provisions. Because by this the sinner is convinced of the nature

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of his wants, and of his need of the gospel. But this no more proves that the gospel curses the sinner, and will finally damn him, if he continues impenitent, than the representation which the physician makes to the sick man of his disease and danger, is the cause of that danger. If in this case the physician should say,—"Unless you submit yourself to my care, and receive my medicine, you must die;" would any man of a sound mind say it was the remedy which sentenced him to death? So neither is it the gospel that condemns the sinner, though it proclaims, "he that believeth not shall be damned,"—and though it makes known, most explicitly, that "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." And indeed, in this passage, chap. ii. 16, where the apostle states that "God shall judge the secrets of men, *according to the gospel*," he is careful to tell us, that this judgment is by the law, ver. 12; and it was according to his preaching, when he exhibited to them the necessity and advantages of embracing the gospel. This view of the subject will show what St. James means by the "perfect law of liberty." He is speaking of the word preached, embracing, doubtless, the whole range of truth implied in the gospel scheme. Now, whosoever looketh into this exhibition of divine truth, and giveth heed thereto, &c., that man shall be blessed in his deed. There is not even an intimation in the text or context, that the "perfect law of liberty," here spoken of, is the gospel, properly so called. The gospel is, doubtless, implied in it, because all the word preached is implied in it. As it respects the clause in our text, in which the gospel is called "the law of the spirit of life," this no more means that the gospel is law, *properly* so called, than the phrase *law* of *sin* and *death*, in the other clause of the sentence, means law, *properly* so called. In both cases, probably, the term *law* is used, in an accommodated sense, to represent a *strong controlling influence*. Such are the habits of sin, when once formed; and such the energetic operations of the gospel upon the heart. This accommodated use of the term *law*, in the text, may, in a good degree, explain other passages where the gospel is called law. For, that it is not used for the divine law, in a proper definition of the term, is evident from the fact that it is set in contrast with the law, and performs a distinct work, which *the law cannot do*. And it is here contrasted with the very law, too, under which man is placed, the guilt of which he feels, when convicted of sin, and from which the gospel alone frees him, when he is *justified* and born again. If, therefore, the law of the spirit of life, in the text, means the gospel,—as who can doubt but it does?—then, indeed, is the gospel distinguished from the law, by all those strong marks of difference, and striking traits of contrast, hinted at in the preceding discourse.

Some have supposed, because *conditions* are implied and required in the gospel, therefore it must be considered as a proper system of law; or, at least, that it contains all the properties of law; and have

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quoted the saying of the apostle, Rom. iii. 27, as proof: "Where is boasting, then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." Faith, say they, is the gospel law, and salvation and damnation are its sanctions. "For he that believeth shall be saved;" "he that believeth not shall be damned." That the ultimate benefits of the gospel are only to be enjoyed through faith, is abundantly evident; and that, therefore, all who do not believe, must suffer the penalty of the law, and be damned, is also evident. But this view of the subject is far from transforming the gospel into law. Faith in God's word is no new enactment, but is a necessary part of the original code, and grows out of the very relation that exists between a sovereign and his subjects. That faith should be made a condition of life for sinners; and that it should be the connecting link, by which the soul may become personally and experimentally interested in Christ, is, indeed, peculiar to the gospel covenant. And it would be easy to show how appropriate, in every view of the subject, such a provision is; but that would be foreign from our present object. Suffice it to say here, that the gospel makes faith the grand medium of satisfying the whole law, for all penalties incurred, and for all obedience claimed, in a way honorable to the divine government, and safe to the sinner. And, therefore, this grand condition is called "the law of faith."

But can any one infer from this, that the gospel has all the properties of law? We think not. And if the sinner does not believe, will the gospel curse him? No; he is condemned already, and the curse of the law abideth on him—and the gospel stands by and weeps over his impenitency—yea, it pleads still with justice. "Spare him another year, and let me labor with him still; then, if he bear fruit, well; if not, after that, THOU shalt cut him down." But if the sinner give himself up to Christ, by faith, Christ becomes "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Not that the *obedience of faith* becomes the righteousness of the soul, but *Christ*, through faith. Do we, then, make void the law, through faith? Do we annihilate its penalty? Do we, through the provisions of the gospel, dispense with its claims? Do we substitute faith in its stead? "God forbid; yea, we establish the law." We confirm its obligations; we acknowledge and meet its sanctions; we fulfil its righteousness.

"From all this we may learn," says Mr. Wesley, "that there is no contrariety between the law and the gospel; that there is no need for the law to pass away, in order to the establishing of the gospel. Indeed, neither of them supersedes the other; but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel: *if they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law; if as promises, of the gospel.* On the one hand, the law continually makes

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way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other hand, the *gospel leads to the more exact fulfilling of the law.* The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble, and holy. We feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, with man (and by the law), *this is impossible:* but we see a promise of God to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek and holy; we lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith, and *the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us,* through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

From the foregoing reasoning, it appears, that there is no propriety in ascribing all the properties of law to the gospel, either on account of its being sometimes called law; or because the preaching of the gospel effectually implies the enforcing of the claims, and the exhibition of the curses of the law; or because faith is required, as a condition, in order to the enjoyment of the ultimate blessings of the gospel.

2. *We are constrained to urge the importance of maintaining the distinction, here contended for, between the law and the gospel.*

It is believed to be of vital interest to the cause of truth; because it bears such an intimate relation to that fundamental doctrine, in the gospel system, the doctrine of the atonement. When the Scriptures use the term *gospel*, as they sometimes do, in reference to the whole system of truth brought into view in the salvation of the soul, under the economy of grace, they do so because strict accuracy in the use of terms is not always necessary.

If any are disposed to call justifying faith, or repentance, or any other *positive precept, a gospel precept, or gospel law,* because they are incorporated into the gospel system, either as conditions of justification or evangelical duties, we will not contend; we are not tenacious of terms. We have already acknowledged that the gospel is often used in this general and indefinite sense. But it should be well understood, that all positive precepts have the force of moral obligations, and therefore their violation brings upon the transgressor the penalty of the moral law. Hence, the atonement has made provision to pardon, during man's probationary state, the transgressions against these precepts, as well as the transgressions of any part of the moral code. These, therefore, stand on the same authority, and in the same relation to man, and to the atonement, as the moral law. In this respect they are not altered in the least, by being used as gospel conditions. They are, therefore, *strictly speaking, law,* and not *gospel,* and are so to be understood, when we speak of the gospel as a provision of life. And this is its *proper* character. For the general tenor of the New Testament exhibits the "gospel of the grace of God" as a provision of life for sinners, as that system of mercy by which "life and immortality are brought to light." When, therefore

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we would present the gospel in its *distinct* and *proper* character, and show its relation to the divine government, and its relation to sinners, a departure from this scripture representation of the subject may lead to confusion and dangerous errors. A disregard of this distinction has led some to the preposterous idea, that the moral law is repealed, and that the gospel, which has been substituted for it, is a less rigorous rule of life, accommodated down to man's weak and sinful nature. As if, because man has become sinful, God would compound with him and accept of something less than entire holiness!

"It would be shockingly absurd," says Dr. A. Clarke,* "to suppose that when man, through his own fault, sinned against his God, and fell from his perfection, that God must then bring down his law to a level with his sinful imperfection, that he might not, by transgressing, incur further penalty! The thought, seriously indulged, is blasphemy. A law, thus framed, could be no expression of the Divine mind—could not have his sanction, and could be no rule of moral action."

Others have supposed, that, though the former law is not repealed, its claims are unconditionally met by the atonement; and the milder *gospel law*, "to which man is now personally responsible, and by which he is to be judged," has its claims dispensed with by pardon, without an atonement. By this theory, sins atoned for need no pardon, and sins pardoned need no atonement. That is, pardon and atonement do not meet, in reference to the claims of the same law. This entirely changes the character of the atonement, and, of course, the whole plan of salvation. It lays a foundation for antinomianism and licentiousness, in relation to the law for which atonement was made; and for pharisaism and universalism, in relation to what is called the gospel law. In this way, little or no use is made of the atonement, in Christian experience, and an indefinite law is introduced, having an uncertain and little to be dreaded penalty.

This view of the subject contradicts the reasoning of the apostle, when he says, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law." In discoursing on these words, the writer above quoted says, "*No* law could make provision for pardon. Hence it is an eternal, invariable truth, that no law has been given among men, or even by God to men, that can give *life;* and consequently righteousness, or pardon of sin, cannot be by *the* law, *a* law, or *any* law; and for all that the law even of God can do, the guilt, and consequent punishment of sin, must remain for ever." Indeed, the idea that the law can be dispensed with, without an atonement, in cases of transgression, strikes a fatal blow at the whole of the divine government. For if one of God's laws could admit of pardon without an atonement, why not another? What need, therefore, of an atonement at all? How great might be

* Sermon—"Life the gift of the gospel," &c.

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the evils, in pursuing out such a system in all its bearings, it is impossible to determine. But, in adhering to the doctrine of our text, there is safety. Here the law and the gospel hold their relative and proper places, in the divine government, and exhibit a sublime and beautiful harmony, in the divine attributes. Here "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Here is wisdom; let him that readeth understand: and let all the earth join in the heavenly song—"GREAT AND MARVELLOUS ARE THY WORKS, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY; JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS, THOU KING OF SAINTS."

3. Although the design of the foregoing discourse was to exhibit what is believed to be an important and scriptural view of the gospel system, and its relation to the law of God; still it may not be amiss to close with one or two remarks, by way of application. There is no view of divine truth, it is believed, which is so well calculated to drive the impenitent sinner from all his vain confidences, as the one here taken. Here is no *unconditional atonement*, no *merciful law*, no *small* and *unimportant sins*. If "the sting of death is sin, and the *strength of sin is the law*," what has the transgressor to hope? The deadly poison of sin is equal to its strength; its strength is graduated by the power of the law; the power of the law is measured by the unchangeable attributes of God, and the eternal pillars of his throne. The terrific thunders of this law are heard as distinctly now, as when they first "uttered their voices." Their roar in the impenitent sinner's ear is tremendous: it is the voice of eternal justice, proceeding out from the throne of God, and denouncing against the transgressor eternal wrath. There is nothing beside, in heaven, earth, or hell, so terrible as this. And there is but one way of escaping the searching operations and the destroying curse of this law. And this is by the gospel—the glorious gospel—the gospel of the grace of God. And as there is no sin too small to be noticed by the law, so there is none so great but it may be pardoned by the gospel, if its provisions are duly received. Before the glory of this grace the clouds disperse, the thunders are hushed, the chains fall off from the trembling, condemned criminal—and *he is free*. This is the "glory that excelleth"—the *gospel of the grace of God*. Who, that values his own soul, or the souls of others, but will dwell on this sound with incessant and increasing delight? Perishing sinner, this is thy hope! By all that is terrible in the curse of a broken law; by all that is insupportable in the thought of eternal death, be persuaded to flee the WRATH TO COME. By all that is glorious in the blessed gospel; by all that is saving in the grace of God; and by all that is desirable in the reward of the believer, be persuaded TO BELIEVE AND BE SAVED.

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SERMON II.

BY REV. ENOCH MUDGE,

DUXBURY, MASS.

DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY NECESSARY TO SALVATION

ISAIAH, XLV. 8.

DROP DOWN YE HEAVENS FROM ABOVE, AND LET THE SKIES POUR DOWN RIGHTEOUSNESS; LET THE EARTH OPEN, AND LET THEM BRING FORTH SALVATION; AND LET RIGHTEOUSNESS SPRING UP TOGETHER; I THE LORD HAVE CREATED IT.

JEHOVAH calls; let the heavens and the earth stand in awe of him. Let us listen, that we may hear what God the Lord will speak. Drop down ye heavens from above. Hear, O heavens, it is the voice of your Maker that calls. Listen, O earth, for your Creator cometh to announce salvation to his people. The heavens and the earth shall unite to promote the glorious work. When the set time cometh to favor Zion, all nature must contribute to the glorious design. The language of our text is figurative. The images are not less natural than beautiful. The dew, the rain, the snow and solar influences, descend from heaven to fertilize the earth. "Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation." By human effort the earth is opened to receive the seed; it is dressed and tilled, that it may bring forth its fruits to sustain human life. Thus, by the mutual co-operation of divine and human agency, the crop is insured. God has established this order in the kingdom of nature. He hath not left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. This is also agreeable to the economy of Providence, and to the dispensations of his grace in the promotion of the temporal and spiritual salvation of men. In all his works he connects the end with means. Let us now proceed to consider,

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I. The work to be effected.
II. The divine agency herein announced.
III. The co-operation of human effort required.
IV. The happy result anticipated.

I. The work to be effected.

God had a gracious purpose and intention of delivering his people, and of bringing them into an allegiance to himself. The prophet sets forth this design in a splendid manner. Their deliverance from a long captivity; their restoration to their own country; the peace, the plenty, and the prosperity, which they should enjoy in their native land, were the themes on which he delighted to dwell.

But the happy moral effects of their long and sore afflictions, in leading them to renounce idolatry, and to return to the true worship of the God of their fathers are subjects which swell his bosom with a purer flame. In perspective, he saw the temple rebuilt, God's worship restored, the divine Shekinah beaming forth from between the cherubim on the mercy seat, and worshipping votaries crowding the sacred courts of the Lord's house.

But when, in prophetic vision, his mind was carried forward to the coming of the Messiah, to bring salvation to the daughter of Zion, his soul is elevated with a nobler rapture, in view of a superior glory. He beholds mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other. He sees righteousness looking down from heaven, and truth springing up out of the earth.

The work of redemption and salvation by Christ was prefigured by the work of Cyrus, in delivering Israel from Babylon, and reinstating them in their own land, to enjoy their liberty and religion under the divine favor and protection. "Behold!" says the prophet, "the Lord shall come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." "He that cometh to bring salvation, speaketh in righteousness, and is mighty to save." He is called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. It is he who saith, "look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, for I am God and there is none else." He hath come in the plenitude of his power and love, to open the prison, to redeem the captives, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim deliverance, and to bring a free, rich, and full salvation to perishing sinners. He carries on this work by calling, pardoning, renewing and sanctifying souls; and by uniting them to himself as their living head. This is that glorious work of which the prophet spake when he said, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days which ye will

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in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you." It is the work of salvation. "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens and the earth, Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." But the work of salvation is not to be confined to the nation of Israel. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, and the isles of the sea shall wait for his law. He will bring the blind by a way that they know not; and lead them in paths they have not known! In him may they obtain righteousness and strength. For in the Lord shall they be justified, and shall glory. "For I," saith he, "create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him."

The work of God, in the renovation of the human heart, is frequently represented as a new creation. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." By sin man has lost the image of God; his soul is totally disordered. The apostle, in representing the mode of operation in restoring him, says, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Being created anew by the Spirit of God, he is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.

II. THE DIVINE AGENCY IN THIS WORK IS ANNOUNCED.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. "Thus saith the Lord, as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth, and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." Thus are the heavens represented as dropping down a divine influence to soften the hearts of men, and to renew them in righteousness, that they may bring forth fruit unto holiness, and in the end have everlasting life. The cheering influence of the sun of righteousness quickeneth the seed of the word, and it springeth up, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

From the nature of the work itself, represented as a new creation, we have already seen the necessity of the divine agency. The history of the church furnishes continual evidence of a divine and efficacious operation in fulfilling the promises, and accomplishing the designs of God to his people. It is manifested in the call and preservation of Abraham and his seed; in bringing them out of Egypt; in giving them water from the rock, and bread from heaven;

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in bringing them into the promised land, and establishing them in the lot of their inheritance; in preserving them when scattered into captivity, and restoring them to their own country; in accomplishing the promise made to their fathers, in the coming of the Messiah, and in publishing salvation through his name to all nations.

The special agency of heaven is seen in every step of the progress of the work of salvation. It is emphatically the work of Jehovah of Hosts. When the adorable Messiah announced his mission, he declared "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." "I have put my Spirit upon him and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

The instruments, employed in calling men to repentance, are raised up and qualified by a divine influence for that great and important work. "Behold ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." "And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with great boldness. Thus the word of the Lord grew and multiplied. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost. And much people were added to the Lord."

But such is the state of man, that every individual needs divine influence to effect the work of his salvation. As his understanding is darkened, his reason enfeebled, his affections corrupted, and his will perverted, he needs to receive instruction and reproof, warning and admonition, threatening and encouragement, line upon line, and precept upon precept. And, added to this, he needs the influence of the Holy Spirit to work in him, to soften his heart, to enlighten his mind, to reprove his forwardness, to stir up his desires, to quicken his soul, to strengthen his resolutions and fix his purposes. He needs it to renew and sanctify his heart, that he may love and serve God in newness of life, and in the beauty of holiness.

All the dispensations of grace are fitted to produce the fruits of holiness, as the dews, rains and genial heat of heaven are to produce the fruits of the earth. Such is the goodness of God that he warrants us to look for and expect this influence. "And it shall come to pass after those days, saith the Lord, that I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more. I will be as a dew to Israel, and he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. It shall come to pass after those days, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. And when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall teach you all things; and bring all things to your remembrance."

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This spirit-stirring and soul-quickening influence alone can arouse the dormant powers of the slumbering sinner, and cause him to feel his danger, and excite him to become anxiously concerned for his spiritual and eternal welfare. It is this powerful voice that awakens him from the dead, and calls him to come forth from the grave of his corruptions. When the wind of the Spirit sweeps over the valley of dry bones, there is a stirring and shaking among them: and the breath of life enters into them, and they live and prophesy. It is this alone that can purify the heart, and purge the conscience from dead works, that they may serve the living God in newness of spirit. "Thus saith the Lord, I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Which leads us

III. To CONSIDER THE CO-OPERATION OF HUMAN EFFORT REQUIRED.

Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation; and let righteousness spring up together. When the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to make proclamation throughout all his realm for the restoration of Israel, and the rebuilding of the temple, then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all those whose spirit the Lord had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord. Notwithstanding the numerous difficulties and great discouragements which lay in their way, they zealously applied themselves to the work; and with mingled emotions of grief and joy, amidst shouting and weeping, they laid the foundation of the house of the Lord, and ultimately brought forth the top stone thereof with shoutings of Grace, Grace, unto it!

God also makes use of human agency in building up his spiritual house, the church. We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. We pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. Although the preaching of the gospel is to be regarded as the grand instrument of gathering souls into the fold of Christ, and of building them up in their most holy faith; yet the faithful labors of Christians, in their exhortations and prayers, their counsels and encouragements, accompanied by a pious example, exert a salutary and powerful influence on those around them. They are the light of the world; they are the salt of the earth. They are the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. Their exertions in spreading the Scrip-

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tures, sending forth missionaries, establishing sabbath schools, and supporting religious worship, are the means of incalculable good. But as every man must give an account of himself before God, he must be actively employed in securing his own salvation. In vain does Christ come to seek and save the lost and wandering sons of men—in vain does the Holy Spirit strive with them—in vain is the gospel preached—in vain do ministers plead and expostulate—in vain are the day and means of grace afforded, if sinners will not attend to these calls, and come to Christ; if they do not improve the day and means of grace; if they do not yield to the strivings of the Spirit, and co-operate with divine influence in the work of their salvation. God works in them, to will, and to do. They must, therefore, work out their salvation with fear and trembling. "Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation; and let righteousness spring up together." "As the earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, bringeth forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God," so the faithful soul watered with the dews of divine influence, in the exercise of his moral powers, brings forth the fruits of righteousness, which are acceptable to God, who blesses his own work, and gives abundant increase of all holy and gracious dispositions. But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. So where, amid the means of grace, the hearts of sinners remain hard and unfruitful, there is a curse of God lying upon them; and a fearful looking for of everlasting burnings awaiteth them; for by unbelief and neglect of the means which God hath sent to soften and bring them to repentance, they have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. For those who do not receive the truth, when offered, are given over to strong delusions to believe a lie; and all those powerful influences, which have been rejected, will prove the means of hardening and destroying them. "The same influences of rain and sunshine which promote the vigor and fruitfulness of healthy vegetation, tend to hasten the ruin of the diseased, when putrefaction has already begun its destructive process; there the wholesome nutriment is changed to the seeds of disease and death." It will, therefore, be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for those who have lived under the light of the gospel, and have rejected the holy influence of its truths. Such evil-doers wax worse and worse, increasing their depravity, and heaping up the awful retributions of justly incurred wrath. However such may affect to believe that they have nothing to do to secure their salvation, they will find, to their eternal cost, that they alone have procured their own ruin and damnation. God, who has made them, has made it their duty to fear, and love and obey him. He

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commands them to repent and turn from all their transgressions, to ask his mercy, to seek justification by faith in Jesus Christ, to be holy in all manner of conversation, to love him with all the heart; and to walk before him in newness of life. Without repentance, the sinner must perish. None in heaven or earth can do this work for him. No one can believe for him. He that believeth not is condemned already. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha. No one can give up the heart, and exercise the affections for him. He may as well expect to live by another's eating for him, or to be healed when sick, because another takes medicine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. But he who confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy. Let, therefore, the sinner forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon him. Nor is he to cease his efforts when he is pardoned and accepted with God. He has then his warfare to maintain; to fight the good fight of faith, that he may lay hold on eternal life. He has now the Christian race to run, that he may obtain the crown. He must, therefore, be diligent in the use of all the means of grace, that he may keep alive the sacred principle, and cultivate the holy seed which has been implanted within him. The Lord requires of his servants that a man should be found faithful. Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. For by watchfulness, prayer, hearing and reading the word of God, meeting, and speaking often one to another, and thus laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, ye may lay hold on eternal life. Which leads us to view

IV. THE HAPPY RESULTS ANTICIPATED.

Which are no other than the completion of the glorious work, which was to be effected by the union of divine agency and human co-operation. God's truth is verified; his grace is displayed; his glory manifested; the captive is taken from the mighty; the dead is alive; the lost is found. A reconciliation has been brought about. Mercy and truth have met together; their mutual demands and pleas have been heard and adjusted; so that righteousness and peace have embraced each other. Mercy has descended from heaven, the earth has opened and received its gracious visits. The skies have poured down righteousness, and the earth hath brought forth salvation. The work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. By the mutual co-operation of heaven and earth, God's Israel was restored, the temple rebuilt, the ordinances of worship re-established, and the Lord dwelt among them. Their minds having been truly disposed to

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receive Heaven's gifts, the effects were seen in a change of their state like that of a new creation, rising out of chaos. Light sprung forth from darkness, and order out of confusion.

I the Lord have created it. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. But, all this, in the most full and perfect sense, must be considered as the result of the work of redemption and salvation by the Messiah. For he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, and let us into the liberty of the sons of God. In consequence of this reconciliation, the truth of God prevails among men; the doctrine of salvation is published. The seeds of righteousness are plentifully sown over the earth, and are springing up to produce an abundant harvest. The desire of all nations has come, and filled his latter house, the church, with a superior glory; and in it the Lord of Hosts gives peace to his people. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. God's glory is manifested in the view of men and angels. His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and grace, appear in the salvation of sinners. The efficacy of the merits of Christ, the energies of the Holy Spirit, and the power of the gospel are seen and acknowledged. Man is led to feel that he is a dependent and guilty creature, and lays readily hold on the hope that is set before him. He seizes the offered blessing by faith, lives in humble dependence on God, consecrating his body and soul a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him, as a reasonable and delightful service. The constant language of his heart is, what shall I render unto the Lord for all his goodness unto me? He sees the glory of God in all his works; all his attributes shine in beautiful harmony, and his own heart constantly cries out, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

In carrying our views forward, in anticipation of the future glories to be unfolded in the Church; when the people of God shall enter fully and heartily into his designs; when the Bible shall be translated into every tongue, and the gospel shall be preached to all nations; when men shall consecrate their substance, and all their services to the glory of God; when kings shall become nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers; when the nations, being saved from idolatry and superstition, shall walk in the light of the Lord; when rulers, and all who are in authority, shall use their influence for the glory of God, and lay their honors at his feet; then shall slavery, and wars, and oppressions cease; then shall the curse of intemperance be re-

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moved, and the sighing of the wretched, and the prisoner be heard no more. Man shall be happy in allegiance to his God, feeling his dependence, realizing his obligation, enjoying happiness, and yielding cheerful obedience. Zion shall then be saved as the flock of God's people, for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon the land. Peace and happiness, piety, and the practice of all virtue, shall be seen and acknowledged as the fruits of this glorious work.

Improvement.

The doctrine of this text furnishes us with matter of praise to God, for the riches of his grace to a fallen and ruined race of sinners. Salvation is of grace. The heavens have dropped down from above! Behold, what manner of love has been bestowed upon us! The Father hath pitied—the Son hath redeemed—the Holy Spirit with all his fulness of grace cometh down to visit us. We, who are vile and sinful by nature and practice, are called to be made partakers of the divine nature. With what astonishment should we reflect on the divine condescension, and on the wonderful visitations of love and mercy to us. The heavens have indeed dropped down righteousness. We not only live under the gospel dispensation, but in a day of gracious visitation. What hath God wrought! what is he now doing for us, among us, around us, and through our world? The latter day glory dawns. The day star has arisen. The sun of righteousness sheds his glories over the earth. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, O ye mountains, O forests, and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

The improvement of this subject, with reference to sinners, shows that they are not to remain idle spectators in this important concern. It shows them how fearfully perilous the situation of such must be, who have been favored with means of grace, and have neglected them. What a tremendous account remains to be settled, by such as have received the salutary influences which have been poured in rich effusions on them. They have heard the precious truths of the gospel until they loathe them, as the ungrateful Israelites did the bread which God sent them from heaven. They have witnessed the powerful awakening and conversion of sinners, and have avoided the means by which they might have been reformed, renewed, and sanctified, and saved. But alas! for them, the harvest is nearly passed, the summer ended, and they are not saved. They have heard the thunders of the law, but cease to fear when the Lord speaketh to them from heaven. They have felt the operation of the Holy Spirit, and have grieved and resisted it. They have heard God's

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people speak of their joys and consolations, and have made light of these holy truths, and have trodden these precious pearls under their feet. But what shall they do, when the Lord ariseth to plead his own cause? In vain may they wish to recall the seasons of refreshing and of gracious visitation. In vain may they endeavor to rekindle the light they have quenched. In vain may they look for the heavens to drop down righteousness, and for the clouds of mercy to descend and water their parched, withered and barren souls. If God has withdrawn his spirit from them, all their wishes and efforts will be in vain. And it will be equally vain to attempt to put off the day of reckoning and retribution, or to avoid the demands of a righteous law. Can they now disdain the justice which they have despised? No. Can they flee from its grasp, or secrete themselves from its shafts? Impossible. One, and only one, alternative remains. It is to flee to Christ as the city of refuge and ark of safety. Sinner, thy doom is not sealed. God has done much for thee. His pity has stooped to thy misery. His compassions have extended to all thy necessities. His mercies, and his pardoning love, are as numerous and as great as thy crimes. He stoops as low, he extends his long-suffering as far, as is consistent with his holy character and righteous government. Repent now, and return unto him with all thy heart, and he will have mercy upon thee; and though thy sins have been as numerous as the sands of the sea, he will freely blot out all thy transgressions, and will receive thee graciously, and love thee freely. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou, even thou, shalt be saved. Though thy sins have been as scarlet, his blood shall cleanse thy leprosy, and wash away all thy pollution. Open now thy heart to receive the droppings of the sanctuary which are falling on those around thee. Come now to the throne of grace, that thou mayest obtain mercy, and find grace to help in this time of perishing need.

Does God cause his doctrine to drop down as the rain, and his holy influence as the dew upon the grass? Does he cause the skies to pour down righteousness upon the dry and barren places of the wilderness? What an encouragement is this to the thirsty soul who is ready to perish. To such an one we would say, "Hear ye the word of the Lord." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Wherefore are you striving to satisfy your souls with the turbid streams of earthly pleasure, when abundant torrents of heavenly blessings are descending around you? As well may you expect to extinguish the fires of the sun with a few drops of water, as to quench your soul's thirst for happiness with the pleasures of sin, or the empty enjoyments of earth. Lift up now your eyes toward the heavens; see clouds of mercy gathering around; see him who is

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merciful to the wicked and the unthankful, and causeth showers to descend on the evil, and on the good. Hear him now say, "Let the skies pour down righteousness, and let the earth open;" yea, poor, thirsty, perishing sinner, open thy heart, and receive the soul-refreshing shower; it is sent to cheer thee, to refresh thy fainting spirits, to inspire thy soul with life from the dead. Come, then, open without delay, and receive these waters of life to slake thy distressing thirst. Wherefore wilt thou perish in the midst of the profusion of Heaven's blessings? Come and let righteousness, and peace, and joy spring up in thy soul as an overflowing fountain, and as a well of water, which springeth up to everlasting life. The Holy One of Israel calleth thee to bring forth salvation. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Wherefore dost thou hesitate? Come and take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord, who will fill thy soul with peace; yea, he will satisfy the perishing soul with the waters of salvation; yea, thou shalt drink and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord.

Christians, Friends of Jesus! Behold the heavens already dropping down from above! See! from the ocean of grace in the skies, the Lord is pouring down righteousness. In the time of this gracious visitation, you are called to be workers together with him who thus graciously favors you; come then, ye lovers of Immanuel, open your hearts for the reception of the residue of the Spirit, that you may be prepared to enter more fully into the designs of your divine Master. Gird up the loins of your minds; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer; come, and make use of the language of the text as a prayer, and still plead, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness," until the wilderness shall bud and blossom as the rose; and while the showers are descending, call on the earth to open, and bring forth fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Remember, human efforts must co-operate with divine influence. Contribute, then, of your substance to send the gospel to the heathen, and to the destitute around you. Bring forth salvation; send the Holy Scriptures to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge; break the bread of life to the hungry, and give the cup of salvation to the thirsty; send the message of liberty to the oppressed, and let the slave go free; devote your influence, your talents, your prayers, and the whole weight of your characters to promote a general reformation of morals, and a revival of pure evangelical religion in the land; unite with all them that call on God out of a pure heart, and let righteousness and salvation spring up together, until the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Amen.

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SERMON III.

BY REV. ENOCH MUDGE,
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ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S LAW.

PSALMS, CXIX. 18.

OPEN THOU MINE EYES, THAT I MAY BEHOLD WONDROUS THINGS OUT OF THY LAW.

THE pious Psalmist had been accustomed to contemplate the nature and attributes of Jehovah, in the heavens, which declare his glory; and in the firmament, which showeth forth his handy work. He had seen his invisible perfections shining out in the sun, and moon, and stars, which he had formed. Their immensity spake his omnipotence; their variety, his wisdom; their order, his design; and their constant revolution, his superintending care and providence. He had contemplated his paternal love in the creation of angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. He had contemplated the divine goodness, in making man a little lower than the angels, and crowning him with glory and honor; and in making him to have dominion over the works of his hands. He had contemplated the wisdom and skill of the Creator in the creatures which he had formed to inhabit the earth, the air, and seas. This had led him to exclaim, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." He had, doubtless, often contemplated the divine majesty and authority of Jehovah with Moses, from the burning bush; in the great things he had done in Egypt; in his wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.

But now, what a spectacle is here presented to our view! The holy man of God is seen with the book of the divine testimony before him; his eyes and heart are lifted to heaven, breathing out his

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soul in the language of our text, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

No doubt, he had already discovered many wonderful truths in the Word of God, which occasioned him to say, "O how love I thy law; it is my delight all the day. Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors!"

Such glorious things are contained in the sacred volume, that angels might desire to look into it. Here are glories brought to view that might entertain, delight, and overwhelm those flaming spirits which minister to the heirs of salvation. Yet hath God made it the duty and privilege of his people to read these sacred records, while they set in their houses, and to talk of them while they walk by the way; and to teach them to their children, that they may know the way of the Lord.

How then does it become us to receive with meekness, simplicity, readiness, submission, and with reliance on the Holy Spirit, those lively oracles which are able to make us wise unto salvation. Every candid and attentive mind will discover much of the truth and excellency of the divine word. They will, at the same time, feel the need of divine illumination, in order to attain a spiritual and saving knowledge of the truth. The natural man discovers not the things of the Spirit. The veil must be taken from the heart, that we may fully realize their spirituality and deep design.

LET US PREMISE A FEW THINGS RELATIVE TO THIS LAW OF THE LORD, OF THE WONDROUS THINGS IT CONTAINS; AND THEN CONSIDER THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION, AND HEAVENLY INFLUENCE, FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF A PROFITABLE AND SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF ITS HEAVENLY TRUTHS.

By the law of God, as the term is used in the text, and throughout this psalm in general, we are to understand the whole system of revealed truth with which the Psalmist was acquainted. The psalm treats of the natural excellencies of this divine word of truth, and the great happiness of those who take it as the man of their counsel, and delight in it after the inward man. The various appellations used in this psalm are designed to set forth its peculiar properties, excellencies, and uses, in the most diversified manner possible.

It is God's system of instruction, by which men are taught the knowledge of God and themselves, directing them how to walk so as to please God; to redeem them from the crooked paths of sin, and guide them in the way everlasting.

It is perfect, as a whole, wanting nothing, and having nothing redundant. Its instructions are presented in a clear, simple, and intelligible manner. They are the testimonies of truth, accompanied with infallible evidences of certainty. They are the sure

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words of prophecy; and instruction to which we do well to take heed. They are right, for the conducting of man into the way of peace and holiness. They rejoice the heart, by bringing the knowledge of salvation from sin; and opening to him the way of acceptance with God; and showing him how to walk so as to please him, and receive joy and comfort from him. They are pure in their nature, requirements, and influence. They enlighten the eyes, bringing, through grace, the saving knowledge of God to the heart. They are true and righteous altogether; emanating from God; they present a transcript of his nature, a chart of divine providence, and a revelation of his grace. Hence, they are more valuable than gold or silver, and more precious than honey and the honey-comb.

The oracles of God, as they are now completed and sealed by the Holy Spirit, are the most astonishing and wondrous system that can be conceived. They begin by giving us a marvellous description of the creation, as the work of an omnipotent and glorious God, who, by the word of his power, called things into existence which had no being; of giving motion to matter, and endowing it with all the variety of wonderful properties which have been the study and astonishment of philosophers of all ages; and a discovery of a few of these properties have been the source of pleasure and usefulness to the world, and will yet continue to be the study of the wise and good, until the universe shall be dissolved and God make all things new.

Here, on the grand chart of providence, these wondrous events are unfolding and filling up the scene, to the astonishment of men and angels. The mysteries of redemption, which were conceived in eternity, and have been hidden for ages in the all-pervading mind of Jehovah, are here brought to view for the information and salvation of God's wonderful creature, man.

It is in this sacred testimony that all we know of the spiritual and invisible world is opened to the view of mortals. The existence of intelligencies of a nobler order than man is revealed. The realities of a future state, the immortality of the soul, the certainty and nature of its future existence and final destination, are here brought to light.

The wondrous system of types and shadows is here shown to be admirably adapted to the state of man in the age of the world in which they were given. As shadows of good things to come, they presented to the eye of faith the infinite atonement and efficacious merits of our great sacrifice for sin, and the power of the Holy Ghost to cleanse the sinner from all unrighteousness. While they served to keep the holy seed distinct, and to preserve them from idolatry, they assisted in the exercise of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

The astonishing prophecies are a cabinet of wondrous things.

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which God alone could foresee, and he only can furnish the key to unlock the amazing treasury.

Here also are recorded marvellous miracles, wherein we see the laws of nature suspended, superseded, or altered; at once displaying the power and wisdom of God to beget and confirm faith in his own glorious revelation.

Indeed, the doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ are wonderful. The means employed are admirable. The operations of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and lives of sinners and saints are astonishing. The grand end of the whole scheme still surpasses in wonders. Well might the Psalmist cry out, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law."

But it may be inquired, cannot man, as a rational, intelligent being, understand, believe, and practise the truths of revelation? He undoubtedly can. By the same faculties by which he receives the evidence of truth in any other subject, he may discover the evidence and force of truth contained in the divine oracles. He may investigate those subjects contained therein, and discover the historical, doctrinal, and practical truths presented to his mind. He may discover the nature and fitness of the civil, moral, and ritual institutions; he may entertain a great respect for them, as being wisely adapted to answer the most important purposes in society. He may discover their adaptation to the present state of the world, or to individual cases, and make very important uses of them for his own benefit and that of others.

In proportion to the clearness of his perceptions, the strength of his memory, and force of his reasoning power, joined with literary advantages, he may improve these truths to good purposes in all the relations of civil and social life. A man of taste, of genius, and science, will find much pleasure in the study of the oracles of God. Here are beauties of composition, force of reasoning, splendor of imagery, pathos of diction, clearness of narrative, variety of character, and inimitable beauties of description. Hence, the various natural sensibilities of the soul may be drawn forth by these subjects adapted to excite them; and an entertainment, pleasing and rational, be enjoyed in the study of the Holy Scriptures. Still further, we are ready to acknowledge that the natural man may have a clear and rational conviction of the truth of the doctrines, of the fitness and excellency of the precepts and institutions of revealed religion, and strenuously and ably advocate them, and conform his outward life to them in a blameless manner before his fellow men. Thus Saul of Tarsus had profited above many in the study of the law and the prophets; and so strict was he in their observance, that he had acquired fame for his morality, and was celebrated for his zeal for God and religion. Yet was he in darkness and ignorance,

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as to the spirituality of the law, and the grace of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. He went about to establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself unto the righteousness of God. It was not till the light from heaven shone upon him, and the scales fell from his eyes, that he saw the wondrous things of God's holy law.

HENCE, THEN, WE ARE LED TO CONSIDER THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION, AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO OBTAIN A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, AS IT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

The influence of the Holy Spirit is needful to bring the word home to the heart—to carry this incorruptible seed into the very centre of the soul, and give it a quickening influence, that it may spring up, as a living principle of renovation and holiness. The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. Before the word is brought home to the heart, a man may see and acknowledge it to be truth; but he does not *feel* and *know* its power but by the Spirit. The Scriptures are indeed plain enough, but the heart of man is darkened to spiritual things by his alienation from God. Were it not for this darkness of the human intellect, the things relative to salvation would be as easily and fully discovered as those which relate to the outward man.

Until the Spirit of God shines into the heart, the veil of darkness remains on it; and until the Spirit quickens it, it is insensible and stupid. Nothing but this will bring home the word with power to break the heart, and melt the soul into contrition before God. He may have read a thousand times, that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God; but it is not till the Spirit shines into his heart, that he cries out, "Wo is me, for I am undone. I am carnal, sold under sin. What shall I do to be saved?" He may indeed have acknowledged that by nature all men are sinners, and children of wrath; but not till illuminated by God's Spirit, did he groan out, "O, wretched man that I am, how shall I escape the wrath to come?" He now beholds the wondrous purity and extent of the divine law. He sees that it extends to the heart; to the inward man. It searcheth out his very thoughts; it penetrates to his inmost soul. He sees its spirituality, and acknowledges the justice of its claims, and the righteousness of its sentence.

He now feels the need of being enlightened to see the freeness, fulness, and adaptation of the promises of grace. He has often read the promises, and may have acknowledged that they are exceedingly great and precious. But how vastly different is this rational admiration of them, from what he feels when the Holy Spirit shines upon them, and so enlightens him, that he may embrace them by the power of living faith! Now he *feels* that they are

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precious; they bring peace, and joy, and comfort to his soul; he delights in them; he sees the wondrous love of God in providing them, and his soul is filled with wonder, love, and praise. If he reads, the Lord is my light and my salvation, his heart instantly exults,—of whom shall I be afraid! He now knows, to his joy and comfort, that "the Lord God is a sun and shield; that he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." It is needful to have the truth engrafted by the Spirit into the heart. The word, then, lives and acts as a holy principle of a spiritual and heavenly life in the soul.

Under the influence of divine illumination the believer knows how, with safety and comfort, to apply the special truths of God to his own heart. The Spirit of God witnesseth to their truth, and they come not in word only, but with power to the heart. They are the power of God to salvation. The same blessed Spirit that applies the truth gives a disposition of heart to obey it. He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, so that he loves to keep his commandments; the fruit of the Spirit being love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance. He can now delight in the law of the Lord, after the inward man; and walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

The influences of the Holy Ghost are necessary to accompany the word of truth for our sanctification. "Sanctify them through thy truth." The word of God is the great means of our sanctification. It is by its direction and influence, accompanied by the Spirit, that we consecrate our bodies and souls a living sacrifice to God; it teaches the way of purity, and opens the fountain by which we may be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. The exceeding great and precious promises are given, that we might be partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. In these we behold, as in a glass (by the light of the Spirit), the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and are transformed into his image, formed anew, after his divine likeness, in righteousness and true holiness.

In the light of the Spirit, what wondrous things does the true believer discover out of the heavenly treasury? What purity and beauty, what excellence and glory. O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? Thou doest marvellous things, and that my soul knoweth right well.

In bringing our observations on this subject to a close, let us try to get a proper sense of the infinite value of the oracles of God. This

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can only be done by reading them with such deep attention as to become acquainted with their wondrous contents. The God who speaketh to thee out of his word is the self-existent, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, wise, just, and holy Jehovah. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of men. Here is revealed the Son of God as thy Redeemer, Saviour, and Friend. The Holy Spirit, who is the Revealer of truth, shines on his own words, and makes them spirit and life to the soul. Search the Scriptures, for they are the fountains of wisdom and knowledge to the soul. How precious are these words of grace to souls burdened with guilt, and care, and sorrow. At the sound of them their burdens fall off, their cares are dissipated, their sorrows cease. They are the food, the medicine, the friends and comforters of the pious, when all other remedies and friends fail; yea, when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, these are their light, their staff, their guide. Let us guard against an abuse of the doctrine advanced—That it is needful to have the illumination and influence of the Holy Spirit to attain a saving knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Let no one object to searching them, and using every human help to attain a proper knowledge of them; and while we do this, let us not forget to pray, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Let us act as wisely and consistently in this as in the ordinary concerns of life.

When you, or any of your friends, are sick, you cease not to consult a physician, to take medicine, and use all proper means for attaining health, because you are taught that the ultimate success must depend on the divine blessing. You could not, as a consistent Christian, pray with confidence, unless you used means. You would pity that man as a deluded fanatic who should do thus. Because we are taught to ascribe all our success in the use of means to the divine blessing, are we warranted to neglect the means? The Scriptures reveal the truth; the Spirit applies it. The remedy is described in the word of God; the Spirit gives it efficacy; the promises are revealed; the Spirit seals them; and without the use of the means, we have no warrant to look for the effectual operation of the Spirit. We must, therefore, study the Scriptures diligently, and pray over them fervently, for the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit. To expect its influence without this would be delusion; and to neglect to seek its aid, under the idea that we are able by the Scriptures to obtain salvation, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, is presumption.

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SERMON IV.

BY REV. NATHAN BANGS, D. D.,
NEW YORK.

THE SPIRIT'S INFLUENCE.

ROMANS, VIII. 26.

LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT ALSO HELPETH OUR INFIRMITIES: FOR WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT: BUT THE SPIRIT MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US WITH GROANINGS WHICH CANNOT BE UTTERED.

IN the preceding part of this very important epistle, the apostle had stated and defended some of the fundamental doctrines of Christ; refuted many of the strongest objections of the Jews; confounded the Gentiles by the power and conclusiveness of his arguments; and opened to the true believer the unspeakable privileges to which the gospel of Christ exalts him. In the chapter before us, he treats principally on the blessed effects which these doctrines have upon the hearts and lives of all those who sincerely and believingly embrace them. So far from being led by the imaginary flights of those who worship false deities, as are the Gentiles, or groping in the darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, as did the infatuated Jews, the light of Christianity throws demonstration upon the path of the experimental Christian, conducting him by a sure and safe way to life and immortality.

This is done by the influence of the Spirit of God upon the heart; "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And that no one might be left in uncertainty respecting his right to the enjoyment of these peculiar and distinguished privileges of the Christian dispensation, the apostle furnishes him with an infallible criterion, by which he may ascertain his title to them. To all such, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God."

Lest, however, some might erroneously infer from these undenia-

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ble premises, that the apostle designed to represent the Christian as exalted above the common frailties of our nature, and as being beyond the reach and influence of those temptations which are common to man, he speaks of him as still groaning, even though he has "the first fruits of the Spirit;" as still being "saved by hope," although walking under the direct rays of the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." But whatever defects might arise out of the infirmities of our nature; whatever impediments might be thrown in our path by the numerous enemies with which we may have to contend, a remedy is found for all these defects, and a removal of all these impediments, in the efficient aids of the Holy Spirit; "likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities."

In these consoling words, the apostle contrasts the Spirit's influence, strong and energetic, with human strength, feeble and inefficient; and shows that, however infirm may be the one, the other is sufficiently powerful to help in all times of need—so to help that the believer may finally be "more than a conqueror through Him who has loved him." This Spirit helps,

I. THE WEAKNESS OF OUR UNDERSTANDING IN OUR PRAYERS.

"We know not what to pray for as we ought." Through the weakness of our understanding, we know not at all times, and under all circumstances, what is best for us, and therefore are at a loss how to direct our prayers, only in general terms. At one time the disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies; at another, to build tabernacles for Jesus, for Moses, and for Elias; both of these petitions originated from the weakness of their understandings, rather than from any particular depravity of their hearts. Under the pressure of particular circumstances, over which he may have no control, the Christian will often find his heart prompting him to pray for things which, if granted, would prove a curse instead of a blessing.

It is in these circumstances that the Spirit, in a very particular manner, "maketh intercession for him," "helpeth his infirmities," either by reflecting light upon his mind, and thereby revealing to him the error of his understanding, or by crossing his inclination, disappointing his expectation, and finally leading him "in a way that he knew not." The Spirit may also operate directly on his heart, create new desires, as well as new aversions, and present, in a luminous manner, those objects after which it is both lawful, and for his highest interest, to pursue. Here often, in this way, does our heavenly Father interpose in our behalf! He obscures to our view those objects which, though we may greatly desire them for a time, he perceives would be injurious to us, denies us their pos-

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session and enjoyment, and presents us with others which he sees are better adapted to our condition. The Spirit helps,

II. THE WEAKNESS OF OUR FAITH.

Were our understandings always clear and perspicuous in respect to those things "which make for our peace," our faith would not so frequently be wavering. How often, under the clouds which hover around us, does our faith in God, in the justice and goodness of his providences, and the stability of his purposes, as well as the certainty and faithfulness of his promises, become wavering, so that we are ready to exclaim, "All these things are against us!" And in the sad dilemma to which we so frequently find ourselves reduced, we feel the justness of the rebuke, "Wherefore dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith;" while we, in our turn, are forced to adopt the language of Peter, "Save, Lord, or we perish."

Here, under these circumstances, often so afflicting because of their perplexity, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," by dispersing the clouds from our minds, by helping "our unbelief," and by imparting vigor to our languishing souls. As this Spirit is called the "Spirit of truth," and as he was promised that he might "lead us unto all truth," so he helpeth our infirmities, by strongly impressing truth upon our mind, by forcibly presenting to the eye of our souls those true and substantial realities which are reserved in heaven for those who love God. In this way, "the feeble are made as David," "strong in the Lord of hosts, and in the power of his might." The Holy Spirit, by powerfully operating upon our hearts, takes us up, in some sense from the earth, and gives us those ravishing views of God in Christ Jesus, which cast a shade upon all terrestrial objects, and makes us feel somewhat as Peter did, when he wanted to prepare a residence upon Mount Tabor for himself and his glorious Master.

While faith is thus in vigorous exercise, through the energies of the Holy Spirit, the soul rises in its contemplations, and feels that in the presence of God "there is fulness of joy," and believingly anticipates those "rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore." But why is this? Is it because of any peculiar strength which the soul *naturally* possesses at this time, more than any other, to grasp spiritual objects? By no means It is because the Spirit helpeth its infirmities. "Out of weakness we are made strong," through this mighty influence. It is then that faith penetrates through every cloud, soars above every obstacle, and grasps, with a strong and vigorous hand, the infinite Jehovah, while it

"Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done

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The Spirit helps,

III. THAT WEAKNESS OF OUR AFFECTIONS WHICH IS MANIFESTED IN THEIR VACILLATING FROM ONE OBJECT TO ANOTHER.

Nothing more strikingly distinguishes man, and distinguishes him, too, as a creature of depravity, than the instability of his attachments. He is not only mutable, as it respects his liability to err in his judgment, and to change from good to bad, but he is ever prone to be perpetually veering about from one object to another, though perhaps he may not be able to assign any reason, satisfactory even to himself, for the objects of his preference. To-morrow he will hate what he loves to-day; and his desires and aversions are ever transferring themselves from one object to another.

But while this remains true in the general, and goes to corroborate the remark of a wise statesman, "that there is nothing perpetual among human beings, but change;" yet there is one object to which man is continually prone to cleave. To this he clings with all the tenacity of the most bewitching fondness. *It is the world.* This is the idol of his heart; of that heart which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish." And even the Christian, whose attachments have been in a good degree broken off from the world, by the renewing of his mind by the Holy Ghost, will often feel these worldly attractions drawing him back again to the world, as though his chief good were concentrated here. This is his weakness. This is the snare that is laid for him. Here, if any where, he will find himself bitten by the serpent which lies coiled up under the riches, the pleasures, and honors of the world.

How shall he escape? Here the Spirit is peculiarly necessary to "help his infirmities." Though he may not know precisely what particular and special blessing he should pray for under these circumstances, yet he may pray to be delivered from "the love of the world." But let him remember, as one of the cardinal truths of the gospel, that he cannot conquer this inordinate attachment to the world, but by the mighty working, the energetic, the *inworking* of the Holy Spirit. To purify and elevate the affections, "to things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," to place them permanently there, as on their supreme object, the object of love, and the source of all joy and happiness, is the special work of the Holy Spirit. This is the refiner. This, like the fire upon the ore, separates the dross, every thing which is vile, from our affections, and then "lifts them up to things above;" and so long as the Spirit helps our infirmities, do they remain fixed on God as the supreme object of our hope and desire.

By thus placing our affections on God, as our Maker, our Redeemer and Saviour, our love and hatred, our desire and aversion,

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become also fixed and permanent. No longer vacillating between God and the world, we uniformly hate that which is evil, and love that which is good, and regulate our conduct accordingly. And though something of that changeable disposition, by which the fickleness of human nature is distinguished, still evinces itself in things of an indifferent nature, of which neither good nor evil may properly be predicated, yet, so long as the heart is under the influence of this Divine Spirit, there is a steady "abhorrence of that which is evil, and a cleaving to that which is good." As the Spirit uniformly leads the soul to God as the centre of all good, and the source of all excellence, so those who are led by it are steadily and delightfully conducted into all truth, and into the paths of peace and pleasantness. While this is the case, the Spirit helps,

IV. THE CHRISTIAN TO WITHSTAND THE NUMEROUS TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH HE IS CONSTANTLY EXPOSED.

In no instance is the weakness of poor human nature more strikingly exemplified, than in its incompetency to resist the many allurements to sin. In addition to the weakness of our nature in this respect, there are superadded the many and powerful temptations of our grand adversary, all of which are most admirably adapted to beguile the understanding, to allure the heart, as well as to inflame the imagination, and to corrupt the passions. "We are not ignorant of his devices." And "we wrestle not against flesh and blood (only), but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places."

With what weapons shall we conquer our arch, our malicious, our ever vigilant foe? "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds."

"No strength of our own, or goodness we claim;
Our strength is all thrown on Jesus's name."

But in vain may we "wrestle in the mighty strength of prayer;" in vain do we pray, and watch, and strive, unless we are assisted by the Spirit of God. This harnesses us for the combat. This makes us more than conquerors in the name of Jesus. When the Spirit of God comes upon us, we feel fully equal to the crisis, however severe and perilous it may be; and though thousands may be around about us, waiting for our halting, making sport with our weakness, yet, aided by this mighty Spirit, we lay fast hold on the pillars of unbelief, the temple of our adversaries falls, and we shout victory to God and the Lamb. In all these ways, and many more not enumerated, does the "Spirit help our infirmities!" "Out of weakness are we made strong," so that we may "put to flight the armies of the aliens," and continually "wax valiant in fight."

I now come to another branch of the subject. It might be asked,

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How does the Spirit thus help our infirmities? The answer is given to this question in the latter clause of the text, namely, "By making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

There is often a mighty conception, if I may so speak, in the heart of the believer, too big for utterance. This may arise either from the pressure of those circumstances with which he is surrounded, or from that enlarged desire of his soul, awakened by a view of the infinite goodness of God, as manifested particularly in the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus—a desire so ardent, so extensive in respect to the objects which it embraces, that the tongue cannot well express it. In either, or in both these cases, "the Spirit maketh intercession for us," speaks in the heart, and carries the intense desire of the soul before the throne of God.

1. The soul is very often so overwhelmed with afflictions, arising from crosses and disappointments, from sharp mental conflicts, and from various other sources, that it is pressed down "like a cart beneath its sheaves." In the conflicts occasioned by these circumstances, despair would be added to the other evils under which we "groan the unutterable groan," were we not sustained by the intercession, the strong, supporting influence of the Holy Spirit. This gives energy to the soul, sustains it under its burden, and enables it to "count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

2. "The desire of the righteous shall be granted them." Though it is often the case with a heart penetrated with a just sense of the worth of immortal spirits, now fluttering between heaven and hell, to be unable to express itself in suitable language; yet in this respect, also, the Spirit maketh intercession, both by producing and making known that strong desire for their salvation by which the deeply experienced Christian is distinguished. Some may laugh at folly, make a mock at sin, and treat the perilous condition of the sinner with indifference; but the Christian entertains that lively and piercing sense of his danger, which makes him cry out, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." And while his heart is thus penetrated with a piercing sense of the sinfulness and danger of the sinner, from a view of the unbounded love of God in Christ Jesus, he is led to make "strong cries and tears to God," that he may obtain salvation. Here it is that, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, the devout Christian becomes an intercessor in behalf of a sinful and perishing world, and often feels to prostrate himself before God, while he can only express himself with *groanings which cannot be uttered.*

But this is more particularly the case in his silent meditations, in his musings on the condition of a lost world, the means of its recovery, and the unwillingness of Almighty God that any sinner should perish. And though the mind of man cannot fully conceive

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of the things which God hath done, and is still willing to do, to save mankind, yet we often find ourselves at a loss to express even those little conceptions of our finite minds which we have. In this state of mind the believer stands in silent awe before God, only expressing his strong desires by those groanings which the tongue cannot utter.

3. Neither is this subject inapplicable to the penitent sinner who is groaning after redemption in the blood of the Lamb. He, in the midst of his perplexities, arising from a consciousness of his guilt and helplessness, finds himself at a loss how to express himself before God. Sickened with the world, tired of himself, and condemned for his past conduct, and hardly knowing either the cause of his distress or the way of deliverance from it, he inwardly sighs for a repose which he does not find, and for a peace to which he is a stranger. Every thing tends to humble him, to break down his spirit, and to bring him to the feet of the Redeemer. The frowns of God press upon his conscience, a sense of his guilt makes him afraid, while a knowledge of his own weakness causes him inwardly to tremble for his fate. He knows not, perhaps, that in the midst of these things the Spirit of God is at work with him, begetting within him desires after himself, after a deliverance from sin, and an adoption into the family of Jesus Christ.

In this sad plight, what does he do? He cries for mercy. But while the word *mercy* trembles upon his lips, or falters upon his tongue, he scarcely comprehends its meaning; he knows not that it includes that pardon and peace which he needs to set him free from his sins and bondage, and which can only be obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here the Spirit maketh intercession for him with unutterable groanings; and under this influence he breathes out his desires to God, until the *Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.*

4. But more especially does the believer find himself inwardly groaning after an entire deliverance from the "bondage of corruption." In the light of God he sees himself more and more vile. This sight of himself, which is also the work of God's Spirit upon his heart, makes him ardently "pine for deliverance;" and under the pressure of this inward, this dire disease, he would soon sink into despondency, were it not for the timely aid of the Spirit's influence, which pleads for him in a language more intelligible than he himself can express. Following the dictates of this Spirit, and borne along by his mighty hand, the believer is enabled so to cast all his care on God as to feel and know that he careth for him, until, finally, his perfect love is so shed abroad in his heart, that he can perfectly love God, and "worthily magnify his holy name."

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Thus does the Spirit help our infirmities, and make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. And from these considerations we may learn,

1. *To be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* Is it so, that "nothing good, nothing strong, and nothing holy" can be effected without the aid of this divine and powerful agency? Then, surely, we ought to be extremely cautious how we "do despite to this Spirit of grace," lest he take his departure from us, and leave us to the wretchedness of our own blindness and hardness.

One single consideration will show us how important it is for us, as Christians, "to walk in the Spirit." Though it must be admitted that the Holy Scriptures are an infallible guide in all matters of faith and practice, yet it is equally certain, that as it respects individuals and individual cases, they speak only in general terms. We do not find any of us there called by name, with an express command that thus, and so, we must do in every particular circumstance. And there are, in the course of our pilgrimage, a thousand circumstances, often critical and perplexing, in which we find ourselves at a loss how to act. Here the influence of the Holy Spirit comes to our aid, reflects light upon our path, imparts consolation and strength to our hearts, and teaches us how to apply the commands and promises of God to our particular cases and circumstances. Should we not, therefore, welcome the visitations of this heavenly Comforter, and follow, scrupulously and diligently, his sacred dictates? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." We may learn,

2. *How deceitful is that system of religion which excludes from it the conscious agency of the Holy Spirit.* Take from Christianity this Spirit, and you strip it of one of its most striking peculiarities. It is "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death." As the tree without sap is dead, so that heart which is destitute of the Spirit of God is dead—dead to God—destitute of all spiritual life—to all feeling of true, religious enjoyment—and, of course, can perform no acceptable service in the sight of God. So essential, indeed, is the possession of this Holy Spirit, that the apostle declares, "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" that is, as I conceive, no man can call Jesus *his* Lord, can claim him as *his* Saviour, who has *saved him from his sins*, but he who is enabled to do so by having received the "Spirit of adoption, crying," in his heart, "Abba, Father."

Away, then, with all idle notions about having a religion destitute of the Spirit of God! No! It is this Divine Agent which awakens the sinner, converts and sanctifies him; which guides, sustains, and comforts the believer, through the whole course of his pilgrimage

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This subject affords,

3. *Unspeakable comfort to the weak, the trembling, and oftentimes sorrowful, Christian.* Under the unavoidable toils and burdens of life, such are frequently tempted to think that their afflictions are intolerable. Indeed they would be, were it not for the aid and the consolations afforded them by the eternal Spirit. Let all such know that "the battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, but of God that showeth mercy." It is not by human might, nor human power that the battle is fought, or the victory won, "but by my Spirit," saith the Lord. If ye, therefore, "being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

While the heart of the weak believer trembles under the unavoidable burdens of life, often fearing that he shall one day fall under the hands of his enemies, he hears the voice of his heavenly Shepherd, saying unto him, "Fear not;" "greater is he that is for you than he that is against you." To this consoling declaration, the Divine Spirit sets his seal, stamps it upon his heart, leaving the impress of God's own image, on which is written, "God is love." This revives his drooping spirit, and he thanks God, and takes courage.

4. *The subject affords great encouragement for perseverance in prayer to God.* In what particular exercise does the Spirit help us? Though he enlightens the understanding, strengthens our faith, gives stability to our affections, and imparts vigor and activity to our souls, yet all this is done in answer to our prayers—to those groanings which are produced in the heart by the intercessions of the Holy Spirit. If, therefore, we would enjoy the full benefit of these intercessions, we must be faithful co-workers with the Spirit—where he leads we must be willing to go—what he dictates, we must be willing to speak and do—and the desires which he creates in the heart, we must pour forth, as we are able, in fervent prayer to Almighty God.

It is in this way, and in this way alone, that we may expect the fulfilment of the promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Yes! it is in answer to mighty prayer, that prayer which is inspired by the Spirit himself, that the soul is "filled with all the fulness of God." And who can doubt that God will answer such a prayer? Will he not grant that request which is of his own dictation? Surely he will. Let, then, the humble Christian continue "instant in prayer," "open his mouth wide," ask for much, even the constant "indwelling of the Holy Spirit," and God shall grant him the desire of his heart.

It is by this means that every thing "is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." And the more abundantly this true spirit of prayer prevails, the more abundantly shall our own souls prosper,

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and the more extensively shall the "word of God prevail," and the kingdom of Christ be extended upon the face of the earth. When the hearts of professing Christians shall every where be imbued with this Divine Spirit, by whose holy dictates they shall be led forth in earnest and united prayer to God, though it may be only by "groanings which cannot be uttered," then "shall the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ," and God shall every where be worshipped "in spirit and in truth."

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SERMON V.

BY REV. NATHAN BANGS, D. D.,
NEW YORK.

SUBMISSION TO GOD.

PSALMS, XLVI. 10.

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.

THESE words were addressed to heathen. Against the God of Israel those "heathen raged—the kingdoms were moved," even though when he "uttered his voice the earth melted." In the midst, however, of all this frenzy and rage, the people of Israel remained unmoved by terror, because they could say, as the Psalmist expresses it, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." And with a view to impress their minds with a suitable sense of his supreme dominion over all things, and thus to inspire them with adoration to his character, they are invited to "Come, and behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth—he maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth—he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder—he burneth the chariots in the fire." How vain the impotent rage of these heathen, who armed themselves against the mighty God of Israel who doeth all these terrible things! Their only safety was in a humble submission to his government; to *be still, and know that he is God.*

To *know God*, is one of the primary duties of man; and the neglect of this duty is, therefore, one of the most prolific sources of the vices and irreligion prevalent in our world. Hence, says our Saviour, "This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The knowledge of God, however, inculcated in the Sacred Scriptures, does not suppose that we are able to "find out the Almighty to perfection." "Full orbed with his whole round of rays complete," he eludes the grasp of finite minds; so that we may say, "he draweth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it." But though the "full glories of his

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mind" are not to be perceived by the feeble powers of man, he has condescended to make such a revelation of himself as to give us that knowledge of his perfections which is essential to our happiness and salvation.

While, therefore, it is allowed that only a small part of his ways are comprehended by us, there is a sense in which it is most important for us to "acquaint ourselves with him;" we must know him as *our* God, who is "reconciled to us through the Son of his love," and that we are reconciled to him by faith in Jesus Christ, "in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins." When we thus know him, we *feel in our hearts* that *God is love*, and that he "dwelleth in us, and we in him." All who in this sense know God, are prepared to *submit to him in all the dispensations of his providence and grace.*

This is the duty, as I humbly conceive, taught in the text—"Be still, and know that I am God." This implies,

I. A SUBMISSION TO WHATEVER GOD COMMANDS.

A thousand objections are perpetually urged, especially by unregenerate sinners, against the commandments of God. Though they may not array themselves in direct hostility against God, and adopt the express language of the slothful servant, "Thou art an hard master," yet the impious sentiment exists and rankles in their hearts, and vents itself in some form or other. When they are called upon to repent, they excuse themselves by saying they have no power to repent; thus implying that God requires an impossibility at their hands. To this, and all other objections of a kindred character, which sinners make, either expressly in so many words or implicitly by their conduct, God furnishes them with a decisive answer in our text—*Be still, and know that I am God.* "Know thou, O man, that I, who am infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness, not only have a *right* to command thy services, but that the perfections of my nature preclude the possibility of commanding any thing *wrong*, any thing *unkind*, *unwise*, or even that is not for thy *highest interest* to do. Submit, therefore, to my requirements, and thou shalt live."

Others take an occasion to excuse themselves from a prompt obedience to the commandments of God, by what they suppose the text itself requires. *Be still*, say they, implies that we are to wait God's time, which he, as a Sovereign, has set for our conversion and salvation. And by this erroneous interpretation of the text, they strive to content themselves in their sins, foolishly charging them upon the sovereignty of God. I do not deny God's sovereignty, but I deny that it furnishes any just excuse for sinners to delay the time of their repentance; or that it will in any degree lessen the

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criminality of their sinful conduct. The sovereignty of God is displayed in devising the plan and fixing the terms of man's salvation, and in proclaiming to him that *now* is the day of this salvation. The stillness, therefore, commanded in the text, is so far from furnishing an excuse for the criminal delays of sinners in submitting to those immutable terms of salvation which bespeak the sovereign pleasure of God to man, that it requires them to lay aside all their unreasonable objections, to submit without reserve to the just and gracious terms of the gospel, and to surrender themselves up without delay as prisoners to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does the master say to his peevish child, or servant, who makes objections to his commands? He says, *Be still*, and do as I have commanded. The mother says to her crying child, *Be still*, and submit, without murmuring, to your task. So God says to all those sinners who "reject the counsel of God against themselves," and strive to intrench themselves behind his sovereignty, while they are impiously insulting the majesty of his government, trampling upon his laws, and despising the offers of his mercy in Christ Jesus, "*Be still*,—cease all your complaints; cease to urge your objections; and make haste, delay no longer to do what I, who am your God, whose 'commandment is just, holy, and good,' have required at your hands."

There are yet others who infer from this, and other similar texts, that they are to refrain from works altogether, and especially from vocal speaking and praying, and simply rest in silence before the Lord. That this is a wrong interpretation of the meaning of such like scriptures, I think, is plainly manifest from such commands as the following: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate,"—"lift up thy voice like a trumpet; cry aloud, and spare not,"—"pray with all prayer,"—"work out your own salvation." So, to explain one part of Scripture as to make it contradict another, and thus destroy the harmony of its several parts, is manifestly to "wrest the Holy Scriptures to our own destruction." The meaning, therefore, is, that we should silence all objections to the performance of these obvious duties; discharge them unhesitatingly, without delay; and leave the event to God, who never commands in vain, nor without a good reason. If I mistake not, the ingenious Mr. Fletcher illustrates the manner in which we may both *be still*, in the scriptural acceptation of this word, and yet move forward in the discharge of external duties at the same time, by comparing it to the mathematician when drawing a circle: while he fixes one point of the compass in the centre, where it remains stationary, with the other he draws the circle. So the Christian man must fix his faith firmly and steadfastly upon the promises of God, strongly confiding in his wisdom, power, and goodness, while he cheerfully moves around i t

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the circle of obedience to God's commands, in the prompt discharge of his various duties as a citizen, a member of the church; fulfilling his relative and social obligations with all fidelity.

In this way he submits, with a ready cheerfulness, to whatever God has commanded, under the full conviction that he who *is God* has a right to demand the obedience of his creatures; and being infinitely powerful and good, as well as wise and just, he can require nothing of them but what is for their highest and best interest to yield. In this way they are *still* before him.

The duty required in the text implies,

II. A SUBMISSION TO WHATEVER GOD DOES.

Nothing is indeed more common, than for mankind to find fault with the government of Jehovah. Not only does the professed infidel impeach the government of the God of the Bible, by saying that it is administered either in manifest injustice or with evident partiality; but even those who profess to believe in the divine authority of the Scripture, and to be governed by its precepts, very often impeach its divine Author with a want of wisdom and goodness in the dispensations of his providence and grace. Though they do not do this in so many words, yet the many complaints which are uttered on account of the hardness of their lot, the severity of their chastisements, and the cruel bereavements they are called to suffer, all imply a complaint against Divine Providence; originating, perhaps, from not duly considering that all things are under his control, and are made to serve his sovereign will. To silence all such complaints, God addresses us in the language of the text—*Be still, and know that I am God.* "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

The manifest import of this language is, "*Be still*, and know that I have a right to dispose of thee, as well as all things else, according to my own pleasure. But to silence, for ever, thy unreasonable murmurings, and to fix, deeply to fix, in thy heart a submission to all my dispensations, *know me*, know that my *wisdom* precludes the possibility of erring in the choice of either ends, or means to accomplish them; that my *goodness* prevents me from withholding any 'good thing from those who walk uprightly;' that my *justice* secures the impartial administration of every part of my government; and if these considerations will not induce thy patient submission, nor conquer thy rebellious will, *know that my omnipotence* will arrest thee in thy mad career; and if thou dost continue in thy perversity, *it* will enable me to overtake thee at last, and then 'vengeance will claim the full arrears.' Why, then, dost thou find fault? Canst thou resist omnipotence? Vain effort. Canst thou devise a better plan, more wise, more benevolent, better adapted to thy condition? Or if

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I were to resign the government of the world to thee, canst thou give any security that it shall be better administered? If not, then bow down thy will to mine. Submit to my dispensations without murmuring, and all things shall work together for thy present and eternal good."

This language is particularly consoling to the pious Christian, who is suffering under the unavoidable ills of life—under afflictions arising from crosses and disappointments. In the midst of these severe trials of his faith and patience, he may be tempted to think that his case is peculiar, and, in the language of unbelief, to say, "my judgment is passed over from my God." But let such remember, that "all things work together for good to them who love God."

> "Wait thou his time: so shall this night
> Soon end in joyous day."

Be still, therefore, before the Lord; submit thy cause and thy case to him who numbers the hairs of thy head, and he shall make thy "light to spring up as at noon-day," and "thy bread and water shall be sure."

The duty inculcated in the text implies,

III. A SUBMISSION TO THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH HE IS PLEASED TO CARRY ON HIS WORK, EITHER IN OUR OWN SOULS OR IN THE SOULS OF OTHERS.

To dictate for God is no new thing under the sun. It is certainly among the many melancholy evidences of the conceitedness of the human mind, as well as the pride of the unrenewed heart, to undertake to prescribe *how*, and *when*, and *where*, God shall work. The manifest design of God, in his manner of working, is to "destroy the wisdom of the wise," to bring down the proud and lofty looks of man; for he "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." And who will presume to say, in reference to God's method of bringing souls to himself, "hitherto shalt thou come," or, in this manner alone shalt thou work!

This, indeed, was the great sin of the Jews. They had prescribed the manner in which the Messiah should make his appearance; and because, when Jesus of Nazareth came, "meek and lowly," it was so opposite to their preconceived opinions, so humbling to their pride, so mortifying to the lofty notions they had conceived respecting his personal appearance, that they rejected him with scorn and derision, reproached him as an impostor, and finally imbrued their hands in his innocent blood. All this originated from the pride of their hearts, and an unwillingness to submit to the wisdom of God, and to his ways of developing his purposes of wisdom and love to mankind.

There is in the natural heart of man a strong opposition to God's

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method of saving sinners. This shows itself in divers ways. It shows itself, not only in the various excuses which he invents for a neglect of his most obvious duties, but also, when convinced of his sinfulness, by the methods to which he resorts to save himself. Though struggling under the power and influence of sinful propensities, and unable to extricate himself from his sad dilemma by his own efforts, he still goes "about to establish a righteousness of his own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God." Instead of bowing with gratitude to the immutable terms of salvation which God hath proclaimed in the gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ, he vainly and proudly strives to have the terms of salvation accommodated to his narrow views, and to induce the Almighty to work according to his understanding of things. All these, however, are vain efforts The sinner must *submit*—he must submit to be saved by *grace* alone, through faith in the Lord Jesus, or not be saved at all. He must *know* that God has dictated the plan of redemption, and the terms of salvation, and that these are immutably established—established in perfect conformity to infinite wisdom and goodness; and that, therefore, his unreserved submission to them is not only required, but it is required because none other can possibly be invented which are so mercifully suited to his condition. Let him, therefore, *be still* before the Lord of the universe, lay aside his frivolous objections, and bow in humble submission to God, that he may be saved from his sins.

There is not only an opposition to the terms of salvation, but there is also an opposition, strong and powerful, in the carnal mind, against the manner in which God works by his Holy Spirit in the heart, in order to bring the sinner to an experimental knowledge of "salvation by the remission of sins." He not only struggles to free himself from the checks, the restraints, and the strivings of the Spirit of God, but he often finds a rebellious disposition rising within him, tempting him to "resist the Holy Ghost." And when he is at last willing to submit to be saved upon God's terms, how often does he object to the time and manner in which the work shall be completed. He either wishes God to come in a "still small voice," that others may not discern the exercises of his heart, or that some great revelation may be made to him, in particular, of the love and mercy of God, that he may proclaim it aloud to his fellow men. Now, although God often works in both of these ways, the desire itself may be, in that particular case, but the echo of a proud and deceitful heart; and therefore, to humble such a heart, God finds it necessary to deny its wishes, and to lead the person under their influence in a way he knew not. Whether, then, God see fit to come in the whirlwind, or in a still small voice; whether under the word preached, in the use of his ordinances; in answer to prayer in the closet, or in the public assembly; whether by a powerful and sudden operation of his Spirit, as in the

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case of Saul of Tarsus, or in a more gradual method, it matters not, so that the work be *his*, and that it be so done that we may *know that he has saved us and washed us from our sins in the blood of Christ.* In this particular, also, *be still*, and know that he cannot err in the manner in which he carries on the work of thy salvation.

Are not professing Christians, also, frequently perplexed in a similar way? Do not they secretly, though, perhaps, unconsciously, resist the operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts? Do they not often manifest an unwillingness that the "Spirit should blow where it listeth"—that God should work *where*, and *when*, and *how* he pleaseth? Aye! here is the grand secret why God's work does not more abundantly prosper. Our pride has already prescribed the manner in which the work of reformation must be carried forward; and if God see fit to deviate from our views of propriety, and of gospel order, it is all wrong; we "never saw it in this fashion, and therefore it cannot be right!" This was the sin of the Pharisees. And Pharisees exist in the church in all ages. Their spirit, which is a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, is ever opposed to the Spirit of Christ. How often, when penitent sinners, from the bitter anguish of their souls, are induced to cry aloud for mercy, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me," do these modern Pharisees mimic the cry of those ancient opposers of Jesus Christ, and say, "Master, bid them hold their peace!" Or if, under the powerful application of divine truth to the heart, and the merciful influence of the Holy Spirit, the devout Christian is constrained to "shout aloud unto God," and praise him for his wondrous works, these Pharisaical professors of religion, always "wise above what is written," and therefore know, much better than God himself does, how he ought to work, are offended, strive to disparage the work, either by speaking reproachfully of its instruments, or by vilifying its subjects! It is sufficient, in all these cases, that we may silence all complaints, to be able to ascertain that the *work is of God. Be still*, at least for a while. "If it bear fruit, well; if not, then cut it down." If those who profess to be subjects of this work bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—if those who are its advocates and promoters live according to the gospel in all holiness and godliness—then acknowledge and adore the hand of God. "Let him alone: let him do as it seemeth him good;" but do not exalt thy wisdom against the wisdom of God. *Stand in awe, and sin not.*

How many Christians, "who have begun in the Spirit," might this day have been exulting in the enjoyment of *perfect love*, if they only had been willing to submit to *God's time and manner* of effecting this gracious and most desirable work in their souls. But, by substituting *their own ways* in the place of *God's ways*, they have "grieved the Holy Spirit," and, perhaps, have lost even "their first love." God says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Unbelief says, this is im-

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possible, at least in this life. Our hearts are naturally so perverse, so feeble; our temptations so numerous, powerful, and constant, that we cannot obtain a victory over sin. This is the language of unbelief, which always prompts the soul to rise in opposition to God. To all such, who make these futile objections, the Lord says, "*Be still, and know that I am God—know* that I, who have commanded you to be holy, am able and willing to make you so—that I, who am *your* God, have pledged myself, all the perfections of my character, to defend you against all the assaults of your enemies; and when I say, respecting them, Let them be *thrust out and be destroyed*, it *shall be done.* And, in regard to your weaknesses, have I not *laid help upon one who is mighty, and able to save, even to the uttermost, all that come unto me through him?* What though the strength of sin in your members be great, cannot I control the monster? Am I not able to bind the strong man, and cast him out—to cleanse your heart, even from all unrighteousness? Only, therefore, submit to me. Let your willing soul bow down to my dictates—follow wheresoever I lead—walk in the light of my countenance, and these things, which seem impossible to you, shall be perfectly possible to me; I will then accomplish *all the good pleasure of my will*, and carry on the *work of faith with power.* At last, then, *know me;* know that *I am love*—that I am *strong to save*—and that none can *pluck thee out of my hands*, so long as thou dost submit thyself to my direction."

In this way let all Christians *submit* themselves to their heavenly Father, and it shall be well with them.

The duty inculcated in the text implies,

IV. A SUBMISSION TO GOD, IN REFERENCE TO WHATEVER HE HAS PROMISED.

The commands and promises of God are always inseparable. What I mean, is, that whatever God commands, there is always connected with it a promise that we shall have strength to perform it. In this respect, duties and privileges run parallel with each other. Does he command us to take up our daily cross, to deny ourselves, to walk in the light, to be and to live holy? And has he not, with a view to silence all our objections against the performance of these duties, from any supposed inability of our natures, promised to give grace equal to our day; to help our infirmities; to enlighten our understandings, and sanctify our natures; and to give us mercy, and enable us "to find grace in every time of need?" A firm reliance, therefore, on the promises of God, all of which "are yea and amen, to the glory of God the Father," is essential to our growth in grace, to our stability in the paths of peace, and to our being buoyed up amidst the waves and billows of affliction.

It was one of the excellencies of Abraham's character, that "he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith,

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giving glory to God." While faith is wavering, the soul is unstable, and cannot receive the fulfilment of the promise. Whenever, therefore, we are tempted, from a consciousness of our own weaknesses or unworthiness, to doubt the promises of God, to question his fidelity, we may be met by the doctrine of the text, *Be still*, and know that God cannot *deny himself*. Whatever objections may originate from our past sinfulness, from our present ill deserts, or from our feebleness, they are all removed by a believing view of the infinite fulness of the "riches of his grace in Christ Jesus." We have only to bow down before his throne, submit our wills to his will, and rely, with a firm and persevering hand, upon the immutability of him who has promised never to leave nor forsake his faithful people.

But it is chiefly under dark and afflictive dispensations, that the fearful Christian is induced to question the merciful protection of his heavenly Father. Let such, however, recollect, that "though clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." And let them also remember, that every twig of his rod, as well as every stroke of his hand, however heavily it may press upon them, they abiding faithful, shall be sanctified to their present and future happiness. We may well say to them, therefore,

> "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust him for his grace;
> Behind a frowning providence
> He hides a smiling face."

While the waves are passing over them, let them believe in him who walketh upon the waters, who "holds the winds in his fist," and who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing;" and they shall be safe—they shall safely outride the storm, and arrive at the haven of eternal repose at last.

In all these several ways let us *be still* before the Lord of the whole earth. Ceasing to raise objections against his commandments, his doings, or his manner of working, or the faithfulness of his promises, let us obey with cheerfulness, submit to his ways with patience and resignation, follow the openings of his providence with peaceful and steady steps, and rely upon his promises with a firm and persevering faith. Happy those who thus *submit* themselves to the government of God without murmuring! Thrice happy all those who *know him* as *their* God, who feel that they are reconciled to his ways, who delight in his commandments, and who *so* "believe as to have the witness in themselves" that he is a God of truth and faithfulness; who daily walk in the light of his countenance, and are joyfully anticipating that day when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life," and when they shall participate in that pure and perennial joy which *flows from God's right hand for evermore*. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

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SERMON VI.

BY REV. TIMOTHY MERRITT
BOSTON.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN, III. 3.

EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE natural blindness and stupidity of mankind are seen in their disposition to trifle with the most solemn declarations of God's word, and the immense interests of their own souls. This disposition is most strikingly evinced by the light and absurd interpretations which, in many instances, have been given of the birth spoken of in the text. Some of these, with some that are more respectable, we shall notice; that we may, with the greater certainty, arrive at the knowledge both of the nature and necessity of the new birth.

I. THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH.

Some have supposed that none are born again before death, and that all shall be born again then; while others have confounded this event with the resurrection of the body. But is it likely that our Saviour would have used language implying the uncertainty of this birth, if it had been as unavoidable as either the death or the resurrection of the body; or that he would have assigned to these natural events the office of producing a moral change in the sinner, and of preparing him for the kingdom of God? To state such absurd opinions is to confute them.

Others understand by the new birth, a regular, moral life; especially if there be added to it the observance of religious duties. But, for all that appears to the contrary, Nicodemus had all these things, and yet he was a stranger to this birth.

Others have said, that to be born again is the same thing as to be baptized. But if this be so, it is marvellous that Nicodemus, a master in Israel, should have been ignorant of it, when it was among the

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things for which the Jewish church was most tenacious. But it is still more strange that our Lord should lay such stress upon water baptism as to make it an indispensable prerequisite for enjoying the kingdom of God. This would be to attach to a mere rite the importance of the highest moral qualification.

Again. We are told by a large class of professed Christians, that to be born again is the same thing as to be instructed into the nature of Christianity. Thus, it is said of the infant, that it is born into the world pure, free from all depravity, and that it needs only to be instructed in the doctrines, precepts, and privileges of Christianity, to be in possession of the new birth. But, we would ask, what becomes of all those who die in infancy? Are they sent to hell without remedy? Our Saviour declares, that without being born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God; and they have not received instruction, and cannot receive it. How, then, can they be saved? We cannot receive this opinion, because it consigns to hell all those who die before they are *capable* of receiving instruction.

Others represent the new birth to be—I know not what—a mysterious, untangible thing. They tell us, indeed, that it is a perfect change of the whole man; but affirm, at the same time, that it is produced by the sole, unconditional, invincible act of God; and consists neither in conviction of sin, holy sorrow, humility, faith, repentance, love, or devotedness to God's glory—not in all these, but is prior to them all; for these are the fruits of it. This distinction between the new birth, and the fruits of it, appears to us a dangerous distinction.

1. It is lowering the standard of experimental religion. If the new birth be thus distinguished from repentance, faith, and love, and made prior to them—and we know not how long it may be prior—there is not only a possibility, but a high degree of probability, that many will take up with a "hope that they are born again," without either repentance, faith, or love. But if conviction of sin be an evidence of the new birth, it will follow that all adults are born again; seeing they all have more or less conviction of sin. How natural it would be for the carnal heart of man to reason thus: "There is a difference between the new birth, and the evidence of it; therefore, if I had no evidence, this would be no proof that I am not born again. But I have one evidence; I have 'conviction of sin.' And it may not be the will of God that I should have any other evidence at present. Indeed, it would not be best for me to have an assurance, as that might lead to presumption. I have a 'hope' that I am born again, and this hope appears to be well founded. Here, then, I may rest, assured that, if I am born again, God will give me the evidence in his own time, and will never suffer me so to fall away as to perish at last." On this ground, without any doubt, many rest till they drop into hell.

2. That regeneration cannot be placed before, and independent of,

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conviction, repentance, faith, and love, is evident, because, when a person is first convicted of sin by the Spirit of God, he has the divine testimony that he is a child of the devil, and an heir of hell. But it is impossible that the Spirit of God should bear this testimony, on the supposition that he is born again; for, in that case, he is not a child of the devil, but a child of God; he is not an heir of hell, but of heaven. The whole process of the work of conviction is, therefore, on the supposition that he *is* born again, fraught with error and deception. Neither is it true, on the ground that regeneration is before faith, that he "that believeth not is condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on him;" for that would be the same as saying, that the child of God is condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on him. God *was* angry with him before he was born again; but *now* his anger is turned away, and he comforteth him.

3. It is not true that regeneration takes place by the "sole, unconditional act of God," in *adults*. Regeneration is suspended on our receiving Christ, or believing on him; in other words, faith is the *medium by*, or *through*, which we are regenerated. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name." John i. 12. "Ye are all the children of God," that is, born again, "*by faith* in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 26. The preposition *by* has the force of a condition, and, being connected with faith, shows, undeniably, that faith is the *medium* of regeneration. The same appears from the consideration that the word of God is an instrumental cause of regeneration, and that *that* word, to prove effectual, must be received by faith. "Being *born* again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter, i. 23. Regeneration is so far from being unconditional, that there are, generally, more conditions than one implied in it. Here is the "word of God," the preaching of that word, and faith in it, all uniting to produce regeneration.

4. If regeneration be by the sole, unconditional act of God, why, we would ask, are not all regenerated, seeing it is as easy for him to regenerate all, as a part, of mankind? It is, undoubtedly, his will that all should become holy and happy. And, if so, and regeneration depend on his sole act and will, what reason can be given why they are not all regenerated now? To say that it is not his will, is too shocking for the mouth of any Christian; for that would be the same as saying it is his will that some should be unholy, remain the children of the wicked one, and perish for ever.

5. It is allowed that salvation, including regeneration, is offered to the unregenerate on conditions. But has God laid down two methods of saving, regenerating sinners—one conditional, the other unconditional? And why has he proposed the conditional method, if, as is pretended, his glory required the unconditional? Has he done this

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to mock the weakness and helplessness of his creatures, who, he saw, neither would nor could perform conditions as unavailing to themselves, if performed, as inglorious to himself? We can see no reason for this two-fold method of regeneration, except it be to support a system of *partial grace*. And, if we mistake not, every peculiar, distinguishing feature of primitive Calvinism, is fully contained in, and fairly deduced from, the doctrine of unconditional regeneration.

6. The term "invincible," as applied to the act of God in regenerating the sinner, to say nothing of the queerness of the idea suggested by it, of fighting him with his grace, is inadmissible. For it is just as certain that the grace of God is "vincible," or, rather, resistible, as it is that regeneration is conditional. There is no reason to doubt that multitudes, in every age, have so resisted the grace of God, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit, as to prevent the work of regeneration in themselves.

7. Regeneration is *figuratively* called a "birth"—the being "born of the Spirit," "born of God;" and the time and manner of it are not to be judged by philosophical rules, or metaphysical distinctions; but by the word of God. And that does not inform us that it is prior to conviction of sin, repentance, faith, love, and devotedness to God; but rather that it includes them all. The new birth is a change in the whole inner man; including the illumination of the understanding, new moral dispositions, right affections, and devotedness to God. This may be demonstrated, by forming the question on the negative of the foregoing particulars, thus: Can it be said of a person, without conviction of sin, that he is born again? It cannot. Then the new birth is not before conviction. Can it be said of a person without repentance, that he is born again? It cannot. Then the new birth is not before repentance. Can it be said of a person who is without faith, that he is born again? It cannot. Then the new birth is not before faith. And so of the rest. This shows us, at once, that the new birth cannot go before these, nor subsist a moment after they cease. They must, therefore, be included as essential to it. And, to reduce that change to some imaginary principles below all these, and *prior* to their existence, for the sake of bringing in the philosophical doctrine of cause and effect, to explain a moral subject, will answer no good practical purpose, nor agree with the word of God. That informs us, that "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;" and that "he that loveth not, knoweth not God." 1 John, iv. 7, 8. And that the new birth includes devotedness to God, is equally plain; because, in repentance and faith, the conditions of the new birth, we embrace the whole will of God.

In this view of the new birth, there is no danger of mistaking it. It can be described, contemplated, and is adapted to all practical purposes. But the moment we resolve it into something different from

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all these things, we wrap it up in mystery, and leave room for the half awakened sinner, and the backslider, to think themselves in possession of it, though without any evidence whatever. By thus lowering the standard of Christian experience, we do pure and undefiled religion a great disservice. We make the higher exercises of grace, and the fruits of the Spirit, unnecessary in Christian experience; and very few will ever advance beyond a *hope* that they are the children of God. But make the new birth to include repentance, faith, love, and devotedness to God, as the Scriptures do, and you give an impetus to the desires of the soul which nothing but the fulness of God can satisfy.

II. THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH.

You will be convinced that the kingdom of God is not only a state of consummate happiness to the righteous, but also that the unregenerate can have no inheritance therein, if you attend to the following observations.

1. *The kingdom of God is a state of the most refined pleasure.*

Man is a being made up of matter and spirit, of body and soul. To the former are given senses, to the latter, reason; and these are designed for reciprocal action and benefit. When the senses are properly restrained, and subjected to the government of reason, they become the means of knowledge, virtue, and happiness. They serve to make man acquainted with the diversified wisdom and goodness of God in the natural world; they enable him to serve his fellow-creatures in the most acceptable and profitable manner; and in many ways they minister to his own life, health, and comfort in the world. He never uses them merely for the pleasure of self-gratification, but for higher and nobler ends—the glory of God, and the best good of mankind. Such an one is, in scripture phrase, a "spiritual man."

And such he shall be in a much higher sense in the kingdom of God, when he shall have a "spiritual and glorious body," like unto "Christ's glorious body." He shall even there have senses; for the body would not be complete without them: but they shall be greatly purified and sublimed, and in a sense made "spiritual," like the body to which they belong. How they shall see, hear, taste, and feel, in heaven, we cannot now tell; but we are assured of the existence and exercise of every faculty essential to man. And that they shall be the mediums of perception, and the means of devotion and pleasure, we cannot doubt. Why else are the objects and employments of that state spoken of in language borrowed from the senses? Consider the description of the New Jerusalem, as given by St. John. Here you have a city laid out in the most exact and beautiful form; its foundations, walls, and gates, of the most costly

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and splendid materials; there flows the river of life, from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and on its banks stands the Tree of Life in perpetual verdure, and yielding its fruit continually. There is perpetual day; all the glories of the nations are brought into it; while its inhabitants are continually employed, with golden harps, in lauding and giving glory to God and the Lamb, whose glory alone is the light of the city.

Let it not be said, that we describe merely a Mahomedan paradise, in our account of the kingdom of God. We have other things to say before we shall have done; our object at present is to show that, among other felicities, the subjects of the kingdom of God shall enjoy a refined, spiritual *pleasure*, through the medium of the senses.

But it shall be far otherwise with him whom we denominate a *sensualist*. He shall, indeed, have senses, but in a very different condition, and devoted to a very different end. In this world, he used his senses, not as the means of useful knowledge and virtue, but for the purposes of carnal pleasure. And hence they imparted all their grossness to his soul, darkened his understanding, perverted his will, debauched all his affections, and sensualized the whole man. He is not now, properly speaking, a "natural man," but an "*animal man*," as the Greek word signifies.* He neither knows nor seeks any higher happiness than that of gratifying his appetites. In this respect he is like the beasts that perish. He has "a downright appetite to mix with mud." Go, see his picture in that filthy animal that wallows in the mire. And, withal, remember this, that by the decree of the King eternal, he is to carry with him, when he leaves this world, his character as an "animal man," and his uncontrolled appetite for carnal pleasure.

Now tell me how this man can relish the refined, spiritual pleasures of the kingdom of God. Can he, with carnal appetites, relish the delights of saints and angels? With all his depravity of taste, and that obtuseness of intellect contracted by excess and criminal indulgence, can he rise and drink of those rivers of pleasure which flow at God's right hand? Or can he find objects suited to his taste in the kingdom of God? Can he there obtain those meats and drinks with which he has been accustomed to gorge his stomach, and which were the delight of his "*soul?*" Can he find there the object of his lust? This cannot be. The same aversion to the spiritual objects and pleasures of the heavenly state which keeps him at a distance now, will for ever keep every unclean thing from

* In 1 Cor. ii. 14, the English version reads, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." But the Greek word, ψυψιχος does not mean "natural man," but *animal man*, that is, one so sensualized as to be more like an animal than a rational creature. FLETCHER.

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that holy place. But were it otherwise, and should one of vicious appetites be admitted into the kingdom of God, he could find no pleasure in objects adapted to spiritual senses. This is true, on the plainest principles of reason. Does the man of neglected mind, and sensual indulgence, find pleasure in the society and conversation of the learned and virtuous? Can he discern the uses, and take pleasure in the beauties, of the arts and sciences? Take him into a gallery of the fine arts—call his attention to the most perfect pieces in sculpture and painting; if he is amused with the novelty of the objects, it is all you can expect. Where the connoisseur finds the greatest cause of admiration and pleasure, he finds none at all. He cannot discern the exact symmetry and proportion of parts in this figure, the softness and delicacy of the shades in that, nor the admirable expression of features in any. He beholds the whole without any pleasurable emotion, and, gladly leaving the dull amusement, hastens away, that he may listen to the lascivious song of the debauchee, or partake in the filthy orgies of his drunken companions. The evidences of the divine existence, and the proofs of infinite wisdom and goodness, which stand written on all the works of creation and providence, never fill his soul with wonder and joy, because his senses were never exercised to "discern both good and evil."

How, then, is he prepared to enjoy the kingdom of God, where every object is "spiritually discerned?" The lights of that world would shine in vain for him. The transcendent excellencies of the Godhead, the ineffable glories of the Redeemer, the beauties and wonders of the heavenly hierarchy, with all the melodies of saints and angels, can excite no joy, no delightful wonder, no pleasurable sensation, in his debased, his groveling soul. How can they, when there is neither any such perception of them, nor taste for them, as will yield enjoyment?

So true it is, that, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

How depraved and wretched must be that taste which cannot relish the pleasures of the kingdom of God!

2. *The kingdom of God is a state of the highest intellectual enjoyment.*

How great is the pleasure of knowledge! How great is the satisfaction of one who has an improved intellectual taste, in being able, in some degree, to understand the arts, to comprehend the sciences, and to contemplate the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in the creation and government of the world! Engaged in his pursuits, he deprives himself of sleep, forgets his food, and neglects his friends; and when he has made a new or important discovery, kindles into rapture.

In the kingdom of God, they shall *see as they are seen, and know*

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as they are known. They will not, however, know every thing. As finite beings, their knowledge, though vast, must necessarily be limited. These intellectual "stars" have their orbits in which they move, and which alone circumscribe their knowledge. Let us suppose one of these orbits to embrace, in its ample circumference, all that part of creation which has ever been the object of sense, or of thought, to him who moves in it: of course, it will include the fixed stars, as well as the planets of our system; and the government of God both in the natural and moral world, with his particular providence over each creature, whether animate, inanimate, or intelligent, together with their modes of existence, properties, and relations; the whole economy of grace, as founded in the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus, with its results, both as to the righteous and the wicked; all emanating from, and issuing in, the glory of the infinite Three—One.

This is not too much to suppose. It is but saying that mankind shall then understand the extent of their various relations, duties, and interests. And it would seem that God will advance them to this state of knowledge, that they may be able to see the wisdom of his ways, and the rectitude of his doings.

We have but an imperfect knowledge of many things which now lie near us. There are many things in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, which seem designed for our annoyance, and many things in the government of the world, which seem designed for the trial of our faith. There are also depths in the economy of grace which we cannot now fathom. Our knowledge of these things is barely sufficient for the purposes of piety. And, indeed, our knowledge of every thing is very imperfect at present.

But it shall not always be thus. When we quit these lower regions, and enter into the kingdom of God. we shall throw off all ignorance of these things. God will then

> "——— Purge the visual ray,
> And on our darkened reason pour full day."

Our senses, purged from all their grossness, shall no longer fetter the operations of the mind; and the understanding, fully enlightened and expanded, shall embrace all that the glory of God and our own happiness shall require. The glory of God, and the complete happiness of his creatures, seem to require that whatever was dark and intricate in his works and government should be cleared up, that they may be able

> "To justify the ways of God with men.'

We shall then see, and be satisfied with, the reasons for mixing poisons in the composition of minerals and vegetables; and for giv-

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ing venom and ferociousness to animals. We shall then see clearly the wisdom and justice of God in the destruction of cities, and countries, by pestilence, earthquake, and war; in the sufferings of unoffending infants and animals; in the sudden death of the amiable and virtuous youth, and the protracted lives of the most depraved, and such as are deemed pests of society; and, finally, in the deep afflictions of his own children, and the prosperity of their oppressors in this world. Then shall be explained the mysteries of the economy of grace in the salvation of sinners; the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the resurrection of the human body, with endless rewards and punishments. Every thing within their respective orbits, to which their existence and happiness bears any relation, will be perfectly known and understood.

But it is not for purposes of speculation merely, that this knowledge shall be given; but for purposes of the highest interest and usefulness. Then knowledge shall be happiness, and happiness shall be as vast, and various, and pure, as knowledge. Then shall be understood, as never was before, that divine saying, "All that I have is *thine*."

When knowledge has been gained and applied to its proper objects, it is "*the light of life*" to the soul. Its influence is saving and divine. Such knowledge shall be rewarded in the kingdom of God with vast additions, and with the possession of all the good things known, or sought after. And hence the intelligent creature, as he moves in his refulgent circle, can say of every object he meets, "*This is mine, and this is mine, and all these glorious objects are mine, for ever.*"

Not so with the unregenerate man. He "loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil;" and, therefore, he "shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." Knowledge he shall have, sufficient to show him the number, and the enormity of his crimes, and the justice of God in his condemnation. Knowledge, unless applied to virtuous purposes, cannot give happiness; and when it is given only for the purpose of convicting the conscience of the sinner, it will produce despair and torment. It is the end for which knowledge is given, and used, that makes it felicitous, or damning. Those who "despised knowledge" in this world, shall have their faculties so extended, and their consciences so strengthened, by the power of Omnipotence, as to take in all the turpitude of their hearts, and all the sins of their lives, with all the circumstances of aggravation attending them.

They shall see the extent and purity of the divine law, that they may know the degree of their own guilt, and the justness of their

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punishment. They shall see all the riches of divine grace, only to show them that they have lost an infinite treasure. They shall see the whole congregation of the blessed in the kingdom of God, to show them the effects of their folly, and the severity of their privations. They shall see the glory of God, only to make the darkness and horror of their own state the more visible. Knowledge with them has been abused; and now it has lost all power to delight, to invigorate, to save; and its lurid ray, such as we may conceive to gleam from the bottomless pit, only serves to direct their steps to the chambers of wo.

"Blame not the bowels of the Deity" in their case. "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." He made the "Sun of righteousness to rise upon them, with healing in his beams;" but they refused to walk in his light. And now the "light that was in them has become darkness; and how great is that darkness!" "Their eyes have they closed, lest they should see, and be converted, and healed." The light of life they have entirely excluded from their souls; and now they can see no beauty, or excellency, in any object whatever: and though, in heaven itself, they could not know God, or the things of his kingdom, so as to be benefited in the least by that knowledge. So true it is, that, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

How wretched must be the condition of that being who is doomed to dwell for ever in darkness,—to have no communion or intercourse with the objects of light, but, horror-stricken, must grope his way among fiends, and hear only the mingled wailings and lamentations of the damned!—and that for ever!

3. *The kingdom of God is a state of the highest moral purity.*

That the kingdom of God is a state of sinless perfection, no one ever doubted. It is the residence of the holy God, holy angels, and sinners made holy, by the "washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" or, in other words, by being *born again.* Of course, every thing in heaven is holy. The place is holy, the inhabitants are holy, their employments and pleasures are all pure and holy, in the highest degree. This is the character which the Scriptures give us of the kingdom of God.

How, then, is it possible for the unregenerate to dwell in that kingdom? And it is not the unregenerate, as we see them in this world, dwelling among the righteous upon the earth; where the corrupt principles of their nature are greatly restrained by the influence of the wise and good, by the laws of the land, and by the grace of God; but as they shall be when the Spirit of God shall have done striving with them, when their consciences shall have become seared as with a hot iron and past feeling, and when they shall be confirmed in their opposition to God and holiness, concern-

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ing whom we ask, how is it possible for them to dwell in the kingdom of God? Yet as we find them in this world, we might, with a great degree of propriety, put the question, how would it be possible for them to dwell in the kingdom of God? Even in the present state, when the wicked are less wicked, and the righteous less righteous, than they will be in the future state, and when, of course, the contrast between them is not so great, they have no strict union or fellowship with each other. One is "striving to perfect holiness in the fear of God;" the other seeks only to gratify his appetites and passions. The one confesses his transgressions, and repents in dust and ashes before God; the other rolls sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue. One loves God supremely; the other has a carnal mind at enmity against God. One loves his fellow creatures as himself; the other loves himself exclusively. Examine closely, and you will find that different principles govern their lives throughout. The regenerate man is governed by faith, humility, meekness, patience, benevolence; the unregenerate is influenced by a spirit of infidelity, pride, ambition, anger, envy, revenge, covetousness, and the love of the world.

It is impossible there should be peace and concord where these passions reign. They produce animosities, broils, and wars; and not peace and harmony among men. Such is the enmity of the wicked against the righteous, that they often "revile them, persecute them, and say all manner of evil against them falsely, for Christ's sake." Such was the enmity of the Jews against the immaculate Son of God, that they "hated him," and "would not have him to reign over them." They hated him for no other cause, than because he was "holy in all manner of conversation and godliness," and they were unholy. And the corrupt nature of man is the same in every age, and only wants the same circumstances to show the same marked opposition and enmity to holiness. The greater the degree of purity possessed by any one, the greater and the more marked the opposition against him by the wicked. Hence our Saviour said to his disciples, "The world cannot hate you,"—ye are not holy enough to be the object of their hatred at present; "but *me*," who am perfectly holy, "it hateth." Of course, if the world hates, and persecutes the righteous here, when the opposition between them is not so great, how can they live together in heaven in peace and fellowship? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? or, what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 15.

Would the unregenerate dwell for ever in the kingdom of God, if that were permitted them? Let them not deceive themselves by

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hasty conclusions drawn from assumed premises, respecting what they would do in a future state. The way to judge as to what they *would* do then, is to consider what is agreeable to them now. Is sin agreeable to them now? It will be so then. Are they opposed to holiness now, and the more exalted that holiness, the greater their opposition? The same will be the case then. Do they shun the society of the holy now? They will do the same then. Do they "turn their backs" upon the Holy One of Israel now? They will do the same then. Beings of opposite moral dispositions cannot unite, cannot be at agreement, cannot dwell together. So true it is, that, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

How wretched must be the condition of that man who sins on till he becomes the confirmed, irreclaimable enemy of God and goodness, and whose love of sin and opposition to holiness would, if there were no other cause, exclude him from the kingdom of God!

4. *The kingdom of God is a state of the highest religious employment.*

Religion is a divine science, consisting of doctrines, precepts, promises, and blessings, brought into experience by us. It is not morality, or holiness, abstractly considered, if that were possible, that will constitute the felicity of heaven; but it is, making these parts of religion. It is not barely to do this, or that, but it is to do what God requires; and *as* he requires it, that gives our works their proper character. There is a certain relation and object to be observed in all we do. God requires that we should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with the heart unto righteousness; in other words, that we should have a faith productive of love and universal obedience. If our obedience does not spring from this root, there is nothing evangelical or truly holy in it. In this case, our best performances are like painted fruit, which never had any connection with the tree. Of this kind was St. Paul's righteousness, before he believed in Christ; and, though "blameless as touching the law," he cast it from him, as he would "dung and dross," as soon as he saw the danger of substituting it for the righteousness which is by faith in Christ Jesus. And such is all our morality and goodness without a living faith in Christ. It is only when we have such a faith that we truly love God, and glorify him in our bodies and spirits which are his. Then it is that we devote to him our occupations, professions, employments, with whatever talents we possess. Then it is that our secular duties, with all the duties springing out of the relations we hold to one another, and to God, take the character of religion, being performed in the spirit of devotion, love, thanksgiving, and praise.

That the employments of the kingdom of God are all religious is evident from what the Scriptures teach respecting them: which is,

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that they consist in worshipping God, in lauding and magnifying his holy name, and giving him thanks for all things. This they do "day and night, without ceasing." Rev. iv. 8, and v. 13. See also Isa. vi. 1—4.

However employed the subjects of the kingdom of God may be, it will make no difference in this respect. Every employment shall partake of the character of religion. I say, however employed; for it is not necessary that they should always be in the same place, or posture, or engaged in the same exercises. Nay, variety of exercise and employment, may then, as now, contribute to their happiness. But neither place, nor exercise, can change the character of the service, when every thing is done in the spirit of devotion and to the glory of God.

During the preparation for that state, the candidates are taught to bring all their actions into the spirit, and under the rules and motives, of religion. Being sinners, they are required to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and doing thus they become regenerate, or are born again, and the Spirit of God beareth witness with their spirits that they are the children of God; the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them, and they rejoice in God with joy unspeakable and full of glory. They give thanks to God for all his benefits, and praise him with joyful lips. Love and gratitude now constrain them to devote themselves, their business, their substance, and whatever talents they possess, to the service and glory of God. They are now Christians, and children of God. They are united to Christ, as branches to the vine; and the spirit of life and holiness which they derive from him, flows into all their actions, and gives a character to all they do. They worship God in spirit and in truth; and all their works they perform in the spirit of adoration, devotion, love, thanksgiving, and praise. This is religion. Such are all they that are born again. And such are the employments of the kingdom of God. How, then, can a man dwell in the kingdom of God, unless he be born again?

There are several shades of character among the unregenerate. Some are professed infidels, and openly deny the whole Christian religion. Some have never looked far enough into the subject to have any definite opinion of it. If they assent to its truth, it would seem that they do it only to show how hardy they are in treating it with contempt. Others speak well of the morality of the gospel, and practise just so much of it as they please, or as will answer their interest in the world. Others go further, and profess a high regard for the morality of the gospel, and assent to its doctrines, and conform to its modes of worship. These have the whole of religion, except the spirit and power of it. And here they are its greatest

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enemies. The vulgar herd may treat religion with contempt, and it goes for nothing with the serious and reflecting part of the community. But when men of intelligence, and fair characters for morality and religion, set themselves against the spirit and power of it, they bring it into contempt with many.

If pure religion consists not only in the practice of moral and religious duties, but in the love of God, and an ardent devotion; then many are destitute of it who call themselves Christians. There is no such connection between them and Christ, as makes them partakers of his Spirit. They are strangers to that repentance and godly sorrow for sin, which breaks the rocky heart in pieces. They think themselves too good to need this sorrow. They have no such faith in Christ as makes him their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—none that gives them a vital union to him. They have never received the spirit of adoption, "crying, Abba, Father," in their hearts, nor was the "love of God ever shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto them." Of course, they never "worshipped God in spirit and in truth," never felt the spirit of devotion, gratitude, and praise, dilating their bosoms. They never truly consecrated themselves, their business, property, and every talent, to the service of God, with a single eye to his glory. Their morality and religion, such as they are, are destitute of that which alone can render them acceptable to God, or entitle them, strictly speaking, to the character of "good works."

It is worthy of remark, that all the shades of character in the unregenerate, from the avowed infidel down to the nominal Christian, centre in one point, and bear alike upon the character of true religion. They are all opposed to it, and the latter not less than the former. They can hear, with commendation, discourses upon the precepts and doctrines of the gospel, if they be brought to the test of "philosophy," and explained "rationally;" but they sicken at the mention of "salvation by *grace through faith*," a *change of heart*, *feeling the love of God*, having the *witness* of the *Spirit*, and, indeed, at the whole subject of experimental religion. This with them is pure mysticism, "sublime nonsense," or the veriest enthusiasm, suited only to a weak or distempered brain. They can bear with zeal every where but in religion. Nay, they can easily brook the rudest noise, the clapping of hands, stamping of feet, the ringing of bells, and firing of cannon, on any occasion of mirth or public rejoicing; but *warmth* in religion is an unpardonable offence.

And yet, with all their aversion to religion, they hope to dwell for ever in the kingdom of God, and find pleasure in heavenly devotion. Vain hope! How can you find happiness in the presence of that God, the contemplation of whose perfections gives you no delight,

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and whose glory you never seek? How can you join in the celebrations of that Redeemer, of whose blood and merits you make no account? What pleasure can the ceaseless employment of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise, give one who is averse to the spirit of devotion? How can you endure a perpetual Sabbath, when it is too much for you to be devout one day in seven? How can you join in the worship of God with those you despise as enthusiasts and madmen? And, seeing that zeal in religion is so disagreeable to you, how will you bear the ardor of heavenly devotions? You will find yourselves untaught, and unpractised in the science of religion, and wanting in a disposition and affections to enjoy it.

So true it is, that, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

How wretched is the condition of that man who indulges his prejudices against religion, till he becomes irreclaimable, and excludes himself from the kingdom of God!

5. *The kingdom of God is the most perfect state of society.*

By society here, is meant, all regenerate human beings, with all other sinless intelligences, brought into the closest union and fellowship, through the influence of the mediation of the Son of God; who is, therefore, not only the centre of union to this glorious body, but is constituted the immediate Head and Governor of it. Thus constituted, this body is called a "kingdom," a "church," and, more appropriately, a "*family*,"—"the whole family in heaven and earth," as brought together from those places. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the supreme Head and Father of it. Here authority is not constraint, and obedience is not servility: but both authority and obedience are prompted by love, and perfect order, and harmony are the results. Here all the members of the family pay supreme love and adoration to God, and each loves every other member as himself. Here no one has an exclusive interest; but they are all of one heart and of one soul; no one says that ought of the things which he possesses is his own; but they have all things common.

The "works of the flesh" are all excluded from that society. There is *no variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresy, envying*, or such like passions; but every unholy passion, every irregular desire, is banished for ever; and "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever are of good report, or virtuous, or praise-worthy," are the constant employment of every member of that society.

> "There, kind designs to serve and please
> Through all their actions run."

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And these, guided by perfect intelligence, as far as duty and mutual interest are concerned.

> "Thus on the heavenly hill
> The saints are blessed above;
> Where joy, like morning dew, distils,
> And all the air is love."

There will be different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven, varying according to the different capacities found among the members of that society; but that will be no obstacle to their concord and peace. The infant who enters that society without experience shall not envy the patriarch who enters it crowned with long experience and many victories; and the patriarch shall not despise the infant. The untaught Gentile shall not envy the Jew, or the Christian; nor the latter exult over the former. None shall think his degree of felicity too small; and none shall think he has suffered too much, or paid too dear, for his. In such a state of society there can be no sense of want, and, of course, no complaining, or murmuring, either against God, or one another; but every one is perfectly satisfied.

The preparation and training for this state of society, will enable us to form some just conceptions of its character. In that important change, which we call the new birth, the principles of moral holiness are wrought into the dispositions and affections of the heart, and are made to grow and flourish under the influence of the doctrine and discipline of the gospel, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That nothing may impede their progress, the regenerate are, by divine appointment, formed into a society upon the same moral principles which are to govern the kingdom of God in the future state. Here will be found union, fellowship, and peace; because here exists that grand principle of all virtue and happiness, *love to God, and love to one another.* Here, notwithstanding all the imperfections that environ the Christian, may be seen, as in miniature, the glory of the future kingdom of God.

But are the unregenerate prepared for that glorious society? No. They have not one qualification for it. They have no union with God, nor fellowship with his people. Theirs is a *divisive*, and not a spirit of *union.* The principles and passions which govern them are those of discord and wretchedness. They are no better prepared for the heavenly society than the rudest barbarian is for the duties and pleasures of the most refined state of civil society. They are no better prepared for the heavenly society than thieves, robbers, traitors, and assassins, are prepared to enjoy the society of the virtuous and good, the executioners of the law, and the ministers of justice. Nay, but being in character and disposition more opposed to them than to fiends, they would sooner unite with the latter, though in hell, than

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with the former in heaven. You may see an illustration of your case, in that wretched being laboring under the rage of a dreadful hydrophobia. He sees the pure, limpid water, and knows its virtues; but alas! he has such an aversion to it that he cannot take a drop, but puts it from him with the utmost horror. Even so you may see the glorious society of the kingdom of God, and know their happiness; but, through an unconquerable aversion to them and to holiness, you will flee from them, and prefer making your bed in hell with beings of like disposition and condition with yourselves.

O, do not deceive yourselves. It does not depend on your will alone, whether you will be happy or not in the kingdom of God. If you form a character different from that of the children of God, and dispositions opposite to theirs, it will be for ever impossible for you to dwell with them, or to find the least satisfaction in their society or employments. So true it is, that, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

How wretched is the condition of that man whose character and disposition render it impossible for him to enjoy a state of the most perfect society.

If the foregoing observations are true, how important is the subject of the new birth! It is too solemn and interesting to be trifled with. All light and absurd interpretations of it are to be guarded against, if we would deal faithfully and truly with our own souls. Otherwise, we shall sustain an irreparable loss.

By the kingdom of God in the text, we must understand the future state of blessedness. How, then, can we understand, by the new birth, any thing but a qualification for that state? And how can we understand, by that qualification, any other than a moral qualification; since that alone is indispensably necessary? Why do any overlook that, and fix on something that does not affect the moral character at all?

And it is not enough that we make the new birth to consist of a moral change in man, unless we assign to it its essential properties. To treat it as though it was prior to, and independent of, conviction of sin, repentance, faith, and love, is to make nothing of it after all; and that which is announced as a change of the whole man, and all important, dwindles to a point which we can neither see nor describe.

To say that regeneration takes place unconditionally, by the sole act of God, is to deceive ourselves, and cheat our souls out of the greatest of all blessings. For he who believes this will, most certainly, never stir hand or foot to obtain it, and will perish without it. And is it pleasing to see men neglect this, their greatest interest? What good, we ask, can possibly arise from teaching that regeneration is unconditional? We can see no reason for it, except it be to

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support a theory which never did any good, never regenerated one soul, but has done infinite mischief in the world. It has been a stumbling-block to infidels. It has produced indifference and presumption in some, distraction and despair in others, as, if it be true, reprobation is its inseparable counterpart.

But if regeneration be conditional, as, we trust, has been made to appear, then how important it is that we commence the means to obtain it, and that without delay. It is to be sought after more than gold that perisheth. You must repent and bring forth the fruits meet for repentance, or you will perish in your sins. You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or you will be damned. And both repentance and faith imply knowledge of the word of God, reflection, and prayer. You must seek if you would find it,—must turn to the Lord, if you would save your souls. It is as absurd as dangerous to suppose that a moral change can take place in you, without the use of moral means by you. As well might you expect an intellectual change to take place in the untaught savage, without intellectual means, or a physical change without physical means.

If regeneration implies the proper use and direction of our senses, then these must be employed, and our carnal appetites denied in seeking this blessing. If regeneration implies the illumination of the understanding, then all rational means are to be used to obtain it. As well might a student in philology obtain his object without study, or means of any kind, as a man obtain regeneration without the use of appropriate means. And if regeneration implies a change in the moral disposition of man, and devotedness to God, then must he deny his own will, and embrace the will of God. And can he be passive in regeneration if that change implies these things? Impossible. He has a great work to do, and awful will be the consequences if he neglect it. For, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

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SERMON VII.

BY REV. JOHN N. MAFFITT.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ENCOURAGEMENTS IN HIS WAY TO THE HEAVENLY CANAAN.

EXODUS, XXIII. 20.

BEHOLD, I SEND AN ANGEL BEFORE THEE, TO KEEP THEE IN THE WAY AND TO BRING THEE INTO THE PLACE WHICH I HAVE PREPARED.

No Christian can expect to reach heaven without opposition and difficulty. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is the prophetic warning Jesus gave his disciples on the eve of their separation. It was necessary to prepare their minds for the great tribulations they were called to endure. In the primitive ages of the Christian church the sufferings of God's people were frequent and unparalleled. Although the hand of persecution has long since been paralyzed, and the followers of Christ are not called to suffer the spoiling of their goods, or the burning of their bodies, the divine decree, that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, is not repealed. For, notwithstanding the fair face the world shows towards Christianity, and the many good and wholesome laws that rear up a wall of brass around it, the heart of man is unchanged, and his carnal disposition the same as it was in the hottest times, when persecutions raged, and the tribulations of the righteous were neither few nor small. This world is a wilderness still, and, to the Christian who has escaped from the city of destruction, and turned his face Zionward, it is truly formidable. He hears the frantic ravings of the coming storm on the outspread wings of the tempest. He sees the bleak mountains throwing their giant shadows athwart the path he must tread—the interminable sands, stretching away, and lost in the distance, dim his weary eye—while hordes of implacable enemies harass and wound him, as he presses onward towards the Jordan of deliverance and hope. He is, therefore, fearfully apprehensive that he shall one day make shipwreck of faith, and prove a recreant from the grace of Christ. But when he

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becomes acquainted with the supports and consolations of the gospel, and finds that God is not unmindful of his people, and has always opened a door for their relief—that the way to heaven, though difficult and dangerous, is rendered easy, and even pleasant, by the kindness of our heavenly Father—his mind is relieved, and a sweet peace takes possession of his soul. The Christian, thus supported and enlightened by the Spirit of God, is a great calm in a great storm. In the midst of strife, and when the battling elements rage around him, and threaten destruction to his hopes, he hears the voice of his deliverer above the storm, saying unto him, "Go forward—fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness."

"When darkness intercepts the skies,
And sorrow's waves around me roll,
And high the storms of trouble rise,
And half o'erwhelm my sinking soul;
My soul a sudden calm shall feel,
And hear a whisper, 'Peace; be still!'"

The Christian has a faithful guide.

The children of Israel were not left to tread the mazes of the wilderness alone, and without a guide. God not only raised up Moses and Aaron to go before them, and to encourage them in the devious paths through which they were called to pass, but he also provided a column of smoke by day, and a pillar of fire by night, to conduct them in safety in their hazardous journey to the promised Canaan. Nor is he less solicitous to provide for the Christian's journey to the heavenly Canaan. The blessed Jesus has undertaken to guide the poor pilgrim through this valley of miseries; and for that purpose, he has already travelled the road, and made himself acquainted with all its difficulties and windings, its sorrows and tribulations, that he may be the better able to minister to the necessities of his suffering people, and conduct them in safety to the port of endless bliss. The Holy Spirit's influence, the light of the sacred word, and the presence of the angel of the covenant, conspire to render the Christian's path plain, to secure his feet from stumbling, and to keep his face turned towards Mount Zion, the city of the living God. Thus guided, he marches forward without fear, knowing that all his ways are ordered for the best—believing in hope against hope; and resolved, through difficulty and danger, darkness, bereavement, and death, to persevere to the end; knowing that those only who endure to the end shall be saved.

He has a strong guard.

In a dangerous road a guide is necessary; but is not always sufficient. But the Christian has both a guide and a protector. "The

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Lord God," says the Psalmist, "is a sun and shield." "He is both a guard and a light. The Lord fought all Israel's battles. The Lord is a man of war: The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots, and his host, hath he cast into the sea. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy! Thou, in thy mercy, hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation." He was their Captain; and vain is the arm of might, the councils of the wise, or the rush of armed legions, without his assistance and support. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. It is the Lord who giveth the victory. He alone can subdue our foes, and overcome the obstacles in the Christian's course. When he withholds his aid, and leaves us to ourselves, the feeblest worm is capable of destroying us, the most insignificant circumstance may work our ruin. But they who put their trust in the Lord shall never be confounded. They shall be like Mount Zion, that cannot be moved. When the king of Assyria encompassed the Lord's prophet in Dathan, with horses and chariots, and a great host, his servant said unto him, "Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear nothing; for *they* that be with *us* are *more* than *they* that be with *them*. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man: and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Elisha." The Christian's guard is numerous and mighty. They encamp around the faithful like a wall of fire. The forms of the heavenly ones, unseen, indeed, by mortal eyes, crowd the region of atmosphere where we dwell. Their presence is a safe protection from dangers seen and unseen. They watch their charge continually, and never slumber nor sleep. No change of circumstances, poverty or pain, weal or wo, makes any change in their regards, nor lessens the deep interest and anxious solicitude they always manifest for the heirs of glory, in screening them from harm, covering their heads in every severe conflict with their spiritual foes, and preserving them alive, when death and hell stalk abroad, trampling upon the haughty ones of the earth. The chivalry of heaven is the Christian's guard! He is supported by the arm of Jehovah. Though all the powers of darkness should be leagued against him, he need fear no ill—for greater is he that is for us than all that are against us. What enemy can compete with the Almighty? or measure strength with the arm that supports a universe of worlds? What resistless tide, but he can, in a moment, roll back! What mountain billows, but he can stay! Can he not hush the wild uproar of contending elements, smooth the ruffled brow of the blackening heavens, arrest the forked lightnings in their destructive course, and change blustering winds into zephyrs, soft as the balmy airs of

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Eden! All things are subservient to his will, and minister to his pleasure. And can he not engage them all in the Christian's service, to ensure his happiness and safety, and to conduce to his present and everlasting good!

"What though a thousand hosts engage,
A thousand worlds, my soul to shake!
I have a shield, shall quell their rage,
And drive the alien armies back!"

He has rich and abundant supplies.

Israel had nigh fainted in the wilderness for lack of bread; his soul was thirsty; but he cried unto the Lord in his trouble, and he delivered him out of his distresses, and he heard his voice. Sweet water streamed from the smitten rock, and manna dropped down fresh from the propitious skies. That rock prefigured Christ. His body was stricken, his bosom cleft, and from thence flowed the living waters that make glad the city of our God. His body is bread indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. The Lord has provided a rich and generous feast for his children. The table is large, and extends over all the earth. There is no spot on the footstool, it matters not how barren, or dreary, rocky, or uncultivated, but what is visited by the rich dews of his heavenly grace, or from whose soil does not spring up celestial fruit, pleasant to the taste and refreshing to the soul. For the Christian's accommodation, the Lord has opened up springs in the desert, and crowned the unfruitful places of the earth with the flowers of paradise, and sweetened the very air we breathe with the spicy gales of Calvary. All along the King's highway, cast up for the ransomed of the Lord, are the arbors, and shady and beautiful groves, his hands have planted and adorned, to comfort and refresh the weary pilgrim in his toilsome journey to the desired haven. He is constantly supplied with every thing necessary and useful to satisfy his wants. Shining ones attend his footsteps—extensive prospects, ever varying, reaching far up above the realm of clouds, glowing with the touches of a divine pencil—ravishing sounds of melody and song, with hopes immortal, that know no bound—and the recompense of reward that no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, and which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive,—all these, with more than tongue can utter, or language describe, are intended for his benefit and use; to animate, encourage, and strengthen him, till he hears the trumpets of victory, exchanges the mortal coil for the wardrobe of the skies, and mingles with the church triumphant on the banks of deliverance.

He is not travelling an unknown road.

When the Israelites fled from the face of Pharaoh and his armed host, they were treading an unknown path. No monuments arose

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to their view—no voices came upon the winds to tell them that others had trodden the same way, encountered the same difficulties, triumphed over similar obstacles, and that they might push on without faltering, having the noblest examples to stimulate them to deeds of glory and suffering. No encouragements like these were adduced to screw up the minds of the affrighted multitude, who stood trembling between the sea of difficulty and the pursuing army. But the Christian sets his foot upon the proud wave, feeling assured that myriads have passed over in safety. He enters the wilderness unmoved; confident, that he who conducted all that had gone before, securely and triumphantly, unmaimed and untouched, to the purchased possession, is able to save to the uttermost all them who humbly rely upon his promises, and commit their souls to his faithful keeping Thanks be to God! the Christian is not like one who beats the air. He is not trying an experiment. He has the glorious example of the bravest and the best to encourage him—kings and princes, warriors and statesmen, philosophers and poets, who have entered the same course, tracked the same rough and thorny paths, have been willing to submit themselves to the same guide; borne, patiently, the same reproaches; endured the same tribulations; and experienced the same joys, consolations, and supports; and are now quietly reposing under the shadow of the Almighty's throne.

> "They all are rob'd in spotless white,
> And conq'ring palms they bear."

When the Christian beholds these clouds of witnesses—when he hears the dying testimony of these illustrious persons, and reads, engraven on their histories, and the monuments of their valor and faithfulness, the great fights they endured, the deep waters through which they passed, the bitter cups they were forced to drain, and the cruel mockings and scourgings to which they submitted with patient resignation and holy joy; manifesting their integrity, unsubdued, and without wavering; even in the hottest fires, and in the dreadful hour of martyrdom, clapping their scourged and bloody hands with shouts of holy triumph,—his very soul within him burns and pants to emulate the integrity, the patience, and Christian fortitude, for which these heroic spirits were so nobly distinguished.

He is not a solitary traveller.

He is accompanied by multitudes from almost every country under heaven. They have neither decreased in dignity, nor in number. Their achievements, it is true, do not seem to make so much noise in the world as did those of the fathers in the days of the church's purity and glory. But they are still conquerors, through him who hath loved us; and are nobly contending for the faith once delivered

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to the saints, with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The enemies of Christianity do not now assume so formidable an array as they did in the days of the apostles and their immediate successors, when the iron hand of the law, and the united suffrages of a great people, were its sworn foes; but they are equally formidable in another point of light, and more insidious and wily, and require, perhaps, more skill and judgment to encounter them with any hopes of success. When the faggots are heaped, the fires burning, and men's lives are in danger; extraordinary gifts, deep religious feeling, with a brave contempt of death, are elicited, not often seen when the church is permitted to worship without fear, under her own vine and fig-tree. There are, however, instances of piety, zeal, and self-devotion to the cause of the Redeemer, among Christians at the present time, in fine keeping with the giants of Trajan's and Julian's days. These are the companions of the Christian, whose sentiments are elevated, and whose conversation is in heaven. They are not of this world; for they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. They are bending their steps to the country for which he is bound; are partakers of the same like precious faith, and contend manfully with him, in the ranks of the redeemed army, for the glorious reward of which he hopes to be a partaker on the morning of the resurrection. What splendid motives to induce the Christian to be faithful unto death! He is one of that great, united, and universal host, which is going forward to certain victory; achieving deeds of high renown; planting their footsteps above the stars; and writing their names, in characters of living light, over the gates of the celestial city.

This subject, thus presented, suggests many encouraging reflections. The serious-minded, who are yet numbered among the unregenerate, often are depressed, and kept mourning in their desolate and barren state of mind, by not applying to themselves the rich and varied encouragements which naturally and graciously flow from the blessed system of our holy religion. This class—and it is composed of vast numbers—fear that, after having commenced the gospel race, they shall fail by the way. They are faithless in respect to divine aid. They see much around them of a discouraging nature; see many reputed Christians, whose glimmering lights scarcely scatter the thick darkness of the wilderness; and hear many a doleful song from that country which should, and most certainly would be, to the living, spiritual Christian, the "land of Beulah," the very suburbs of heaven. So, in former times, the Israelites were discouraged by the difficulties of the wilderness way that spread out

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before them; they murmured for the flesh-pots of Egypt, although at the immense price of national bondage, rather than follow that glorious pillar of fire and cloud which was leading them with a sure and steady progress to the lovely valleys of Canaan. The serious mind should ever remember that God is not afar off. He hideth not himself in darkness. Creation is even now full of the symbols of his presence, as palpable and as strongly indicated to the man of faith as the pillar that stretched itself from earth to the skies, alternately in the van and the rear of the chosen tribes. Would not thousands who now linger behind, while the church is marching onward, arise at once, if they could only have the assurance that their steps should not falter in the heavenly pathway? Will it encourage this class to tell them that a humble yet determined resolution to serve the God of Jacob, through weakness and in strength, will be answered by a blessing from Jehovah? Will it animate any one of these desponding minds to learn that, so far as we trust or rely upon God, just so far additional resolution, comfort, light, encouragement, and a good assurance is bountifully bestowed, through Jesus Christ, by the same beneficent hand that pours out the light of day upon all lands, and sprinkles the reviving dews, and opens the treasures of the clouds upon the parched plains—that same Almighty One, who is perpetually giving, without measure and without price, even to the ungrateful and the unthankful? All this—yea, more, may be told to this class of hesitating mourners, on the unerring authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is precious to the downcast soul to learn that the promises of peace and mercy may be applied to its own case—its own particular wants.

Christians may reap a new and ever increasing harvest of blessed assurance from the words and the mighty Spirit of the text. Yes, Christian, thine every step is ever attended by an angel—the angel of the covenant; unseen he may be to the natural eye, but he certainly is near thee, if thou standest on holy ground. His countenance is full of gracious forbearance. His love passeth the friendship of earth. His steps are with thine when thou passest through the chilling waters of the sea of death. Why, O Christian, dost thou not put on an unfailing courage, and shout with a song of triumph as loud as the thunder of the great deep, when it cries to heaven from its lowest caverns; strong is thy defence! Thine attendant is one whose eye is dreadful to thine enemies; but full, overflowing with tender compassions for thee!

The wide spread "sacramental host" of the church gathers all its confidence, and its full assurance of victory, from this unsealed and unfathomable fountain of endless consolation. Let us, for one brief moment, look at the attitude of the church. Now, perhaps, in tears, in dust, trodden down by the oppressor, and stained with her own blood;

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to-morrow she shines like some glorious one, and the kings of the earth tremble before the holy splendors of her countenance. To-day, following, with mournful step, a brother in Jesus to the lonely tomb; to-morrow, with a loud song, proclaiming that all is well with him who is in the dust; all is well this side of death, and all is triumphant beyond! To-day, a seemingly feeble band, against which proud words of scorn are leveled; to-morrow, a host, with banners streaming under the whole heaven, with more than mortal music burdening every breeze—with crowns and plumes, and the intense gleams of immortal panoply kindling on every cloud, and illuminating every mountain and valley. Well might the seer who, for gold, sought out a curse for Jacob, say: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

This was a prospective view—only lifting up a little the curtain which hung over the future prospects of the church. The same thought is amplified, if not adorned, by Pollock, the pious poet, who sung his soul to sleep with such strains as these:

> "How fair the daughter of Jerusalem, then!
> How gloriously from Zion's hill she looked!
> Cloth'd with the sun; and in her train the moon:
> And on her head a coronet of stars;
> And girding round her waist, with heav'nly grace,
> The bow of mercy bright; and in her hand
> Immanuel's cross—her sceptre and her hope."

But these views, rich as they are with unspeakable blessings, are taken from the earth. The church now is seen going further on to the very place which God has prepared for her. Change, and vicissitude, and death, invaded the territories of Jacob below; but he has a place now prepared for him; a kingdom not to be measured by human meters, nor invaded by earthly woes, or battle, or change. Countless angels are throwing open the gates to this region, as immeasurably wide as it is beautiful, beyond the power of language to paint; and trumpets and harps, pouring forth the volumes of song, such as earth never heard, summon the redeemed to their last joyful resting place.

Death is now no more. Sin is shut out for ever. Heaven burns with its accumulated bliss. It has now reaped the great harvest of the earth. It now, to its other songs, hath added the greater one of *redeeming love*. And now, beyond this point, it is not permitted to penetrate further. Here this blessed interdiction begins,—eye hath not seen—ear hath not heard—heart hath not conceived. All beyond is glory insufferably bright.

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SERMON VIII.

BY REV. JOHN N. MAFFITT.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

1 Timothy, i. 15.

CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS.

Christ Jesus came into the world.

From that hour, when the promise of a Saviour broke the fearful gloom that had spread its dark curtains over paradise, down to the auspicious moment when celestial choirs poured upon the ears of wondering shepherds the new and ravishing song of deliverance and peace, the world had been gradually preparing for his appearance. The children of men—those more especially to whom appertained the covenant and promise—were taught to expect some great personage, clothed with divine authority and unlimited power. At length, in the fulness of time, after a variety of strange phenomena, operating alike on the heathen and Jewish world, presenting signal omens, portentous and overwhelming, the star of the promised Prince ushered in his glorious reign, and Christ was worshipped by the Eastern magi, while yet an infant, under the significant title of King of the Jews. The coming of the Messiah had been described by saint and seer, patriarch and king, with the pomp of oratory and the eloquence of song. The circumstance and stateliness of kingly dominion and magnificent display, portrayed in the Jewish writings, tended to give importance and grandeur to his expected appearance and reign. But, notwithstanding the picture was highly colored, the outline vast and imposing, it was not to be understood literally. The glory and the beauty, the magnitude and the display, were to be spiritually discerned; and, therefore, none but spiritual minds could comprehend the connection between the lowliness of the Redeemer's person and appearance and the lofty annunciations of the prophet's harp. The Jews were wholly absorbed in the letter, and they were thus unprepared, or unwilling,

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to pierce the veil of flesh, and poverty of circumstance, which flung a cloud over the ascending Sun. The prophet sang in vain, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee!" The Jews believed the record, but they rejoiced not in the coming of Christ. The daughters of Jerusalem shouted not at the birth of their King. But though they gave no welcome to their long expected one, dazzling squadrons from the high empyrean were not unmindful of the great event. If man sang no glad song, tuned no golden lyre, multitudes of the heavenly hosts hymned his praise, and celebrated his birth in lofty strains of angelic music.

"In heaven the rapt'rous song began,
And sweet, seraphic fire
Through all the shining regions ran,
And strung, and tun'd the lyre."

And though no light flashed up from earth, "to bid the brightest and best of the morning" welcome to our sin-stained soil, a new and brilliant star glittered in the dome of heaven, the precursor of his glorious reign.

He was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; yet, "Hear, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!" he became man! He was in the form of God, and counted it not robbery to be equal with God; yet, he descended from his royal throne, clothed himself with the dust of his footstool, and became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh! In the ignoble garb of a servant of servants, he entered the sinful and troubled abodes of mortality, to be our partner in suffering and sorrow, that he might be deeply imbued with the finest sensitive feelings of poor human nature.

"Touch'd with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he hath felt the same."

He came to his own, and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected by the very beings for whose salvation and happiness he had left the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and from whom he had a right to expect the most profound reverence, and demonstrations of the highest joy. No sooner was it noised abroad that the Christ was born in Bethlehem, according to the prophets, than Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. A base and bloody order was issued by the pusillanimous monarch, who felt conscious of the insecurity of his throne, and trembled, lest the new born Prince was destined to wrench the sceptre from his impious grasp. Nor did their malicious and blood-thirsty designs against his person, his character, and ministry, abate, till the insulting, barbarous, and tragic scenes of the garden, the judgment hall, the pillar, and the cross, consummated their diabolical purposes.

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Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Man is guilty, weighed down under the curse of a law he has wilfully and wickedly broken. Having thus ruined himself, he is unable to meet the perfect obedience required by the divine statute, and has thus sunk into deep and irremediable condemnation, exposed to wrath and punishment, without any dawning of hope, or any intercessions of mercy. In this sense men are sinners—all men. There is no exception; for in Adam all die. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The whole world lieth in wickedness. There is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one.

Man is unholy. Unholiness is guilt. The unholy and sinful dispositions of the human heart are exhibited in the pages of man's history with more or less enormity; but they have, invariably, the same crimson type from Adam down to the present hour. This truth is established in every stage of his brief existence in every country, and through all orders and grades of society. The whole family of man, being thus tainted with this great moral pollution, are thus separated from all friendly intercourse or communion with the pure Being against whom they have rebelled, and whose government and laws they have slighted and trampled under foot. This separation from God deepens the pit into which they are plunged, rendering their case hopeless in this life, exposing them to the thunderbolts of the next, and to the eternal horrors of a terrible and irrevocable perdition.

"How sad our state by nature is!
Our sin, how deep its stains!"

To save man from his sins, and to shield him from the impending ruin that thundered on his path, the Lord Jesus came into the world. "He shall save his people from their sins," is the signification of his name. His own words confirm this truth—"the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This benevolent and godlike purpose engaged his attention during the whole course of his ministry and life; nor did his sufferings, or the cruelties that he endured, even in their extreme and bitterest agonies, absorb this great, leading feature of his character.

The manner in which he accomplished this great design, and prepared the way for the sinner's recovery, salvation, and happiness, is in perfect accordance with the claims of justice and the criminality of the offender. Man is guilty before God, condemned, and awaiting the sentence of death, unable to yield a perfect obedience to the divine precept; without hope, having no plea, and totally ruined and undone. In this trying juncture, Christ offers himself as his substitute, places himself at the bar of justice, receives the blow intended for the criminal, obeys the law in all its minutiæ and extent, satisfy-

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ing its most rigorous demands, and making it possible for the guilty and condemned wretch to be released from the bondage of sin, restored to the divine favor and image; at the same time guarding every infringement upon the justice of the Lawgiver, so that God can now be just, and the justifier of all them who sincerely repent and unfeignedly believe in his Son Jesus Christ, the slain Lamb, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. There is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood.

"To man the bleeding cross has promised all:
The bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace."

See the consummation of the promise given to Adam in the hour of his depression, and in the night of his guilt, in the sufferings and death of Jesus! Behold the foot of the promised seed bruising the head of the great serpent, and from the bloody brow of Calvary triumphing over principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, strewing their honors in the dust, and withering the strength of the mighty and the renowned! Behold the Son of the eternal God, clothed in the robes of his priesthood, dyed with the blood of the grape, alone and single-handed, treading the wine press of the wrath of God! See him coming out of Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, crushing down the walls of our prison house, entering the lists with all our enemies, disarming death of its terrors, the grave of its boasted triumphs, bursting the barriers of the tomb, and binding, with the golden chain of his atonement, earth to heaven, man to God; lifting the everlasting gates, and pointing far, far away, up into the highest heavens, to the mansions of everlasting blessedness and peace, prepared for the faithful from the foundations of the world.

"Who is the King of glory, who?
The Lord that all our foes o'ercame,
The world, and sin, and hell o'erthrew,
And Jesus is the conq'rer's name."

The terms of salvation are few and simple, and accord well with the plan of redemption and the character of the atonement made by Jesus Christ. Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are the conditions prescribed in the gospel. Our repentance should be deep, sincere, and lasting; our faith of the operation of the Spirit, for faith is the gift of God. It should be fixed singly on God, through Jesus Christ, the great Mediator between God and man, without any reliance upon ourselves, or our own righteousness; for by the deeds of the law no man can be justified in the sight of God. He must, therefore, turn away from Sinai, and

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from self, from every point of heaven, from all hope and every plea, but, God be merciful to me a sinner.

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

Come to God, pleading the merits of a Saviour—

"Five bleeding wounds he bears,
Receiv'd on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly speak for me.
Forgive him, O forgive, they cry,
Nor let that ransom'd sinner die!"

And mark the success of the appeal—

"The Father hears him pray,
His dear, anointed One:
He cannot turn away
The presence of his Son:
His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God."

The salvation alluded to is not circumscribed in its operations. It does not merely imply the entire acquittal of the condemned sinner. It changes as well as justifies; working a moral reformation in the dispositions of the heart, in the conversation, and the life. It is a salvation from all sin, from the least and last remains of the carnal nature. The Bible teaches this encouraging doctrine, using the language of authority, and plainly saying, that without holiness of heart we shall never see God. The man who believes with a heart unto righteousness, to him is the reward, not of debt, and this reward is the indwelling Spirit witnessing with his, not only that he is born again, but that he is also sanctified, set apart for God's use, to be a vessel of honor in the spiritual church of the Lord; the very thoughts of his heart being cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, so that he now perfectly loves God, and worthily magnifies his holy name. Are we justified? Can we set to our seal, that God for Christ's sake has pardoned our sins? If we can rejoice in the divine favor, and know in whom we have believed, let us go forward, bearing precious seed, full of faith in the promises, and relying implicitly on the assurances of God's word, and we shall feel a spiritual enlargement of soul. We shall be saved with an entire salvation from all sin, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The designs of Christ's coming into the world will be answered in all their evangelical bearings. We shall no longer go mourning all our days, limiting the Almighty by our lack of faith, want of decision of character, and sinful backwardness. All the Christian graces shall distinguish our onward course, irradiating our

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path, and giving out a beautiful epitome of true religion, in the conformity of our lives to the precepts of the gospel.

We may go further onward, and still find, as we progress, that immortal blessings spring up in consequence of Christ's coming, beyond the precincts of time. Christ came into our world, that we might go into a better world. Christians have no expectation of reaping all the benefits of Christ's coming, in this world: here they expect to taste of his salvation—in heaven it will be all their food. Here they expect, indeed, to love much, as much has been forgiven them—here they expect to pray much, as they have many wants—here they expect to praise much, as they have eternal cause for songs and thanksgiving—here they expect to be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect; and here, beneath nature's sun, they do expect the sun of heavenly joy will grow broader and more brilliant, as the sands of their earthly hours decline, until its rounded and palpable disk shall seem to absorb every other prospect; but in heaven they expect not only an immeasurable flood of glory; they expect, also, ever expanding capacities of mind, soul, and spirit, to take in and enjoy this augmenting tide of holy delight.

In conclusion, we pause a moment over the magnitude of the event described in the words of the text,—Christ came into the world. The advent must ever rank higher in the gradations of earthly occurrences than any other. As the closing of the Jewish dispensation, and the opening of the Christian era, it bears an imposing attitude; as the accomplishment of promises which had cheered the inhabitants of the earlier world; as a most magnificent display of heavenly mercy and condescension; as a death blow to the otherwise unbroken tyranny of sin and destruction; as the last sure refuge of humanity, under its load of woes and sufferings; and as furnishing the only ark of salvation that shall be able to bear up against the earth's second deluge, that of fire,—the advent has an importance which calls for admiration, and demands the loudest songs of adoring angels and redeemed men. Christ came into the world, and every ancient type and shadow submerged in the full tide of glory that rolled before him at his coming. Christ came into the world, and, for the first and only time, the far wandering music of the sweet heavens struck on mortal ears. Christ came into the world, and the star of his empire arose in lovely radiance over Bethlehem. He came, and the demons of despair, with clenched hands and blood-shot eyes, spread out their dragon wings to return to their native hell. He came, and the realms of darkness were involved in heavier clouds, and gave out more terrific groans, as the last hopes of the thunder-blasted monarch below were quenched for ever in the streams that flowed down the rocky steeps

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of Calvary. He came, and Sinai thundered terribly and hopelessly no more—the Lion of Judah and the voice of the broken mandate became silent to those who sprinkled themselves with the blood of this sacrifice—and the trumpet-tongued song of unnumbered millions in heaven smote on prophetic ears like the sound of many waters.

How precious is Christ to every one who has received him, and knows, experimentally, the value of his redeeming love! In vain have the flowery epithets of magniloquent East exhausted their perfumes on the Saviour's name and perfections; his beauties are yet unspoken, undescribed. Every Christian, whether he possess the oriental order of character, or the hyperborean frigidity, knows how weak and imbecile are the loftiest powers of language to describe the chiefest among ten thousand—the one altogether lovely. Sun of the morning—the Day Spring from on high—the Beauty of holiness—Angel of the covenant—slain Lamb of God—Priest—Prophet—King,—accept our poor attempts to honor thee in that world, whose crown of thorns, whose rugged wood, whose inhospitable soil, were stained with thy blood, freely poured for the salvation of its guilty inhabitants.

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SERMON IX.

BY REV. BENJAMIN F. LAMBORD.

THE SOUL TRANSFORMED BY A BELIEVING VIEW OF GOD.

2 Corinthians iii, 18.

BUT WE ALL, WITH OPEN FACE BEHOLDING AS IN A GLASS THE GLORY OF THE LORD, ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY, EVEN AS BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD.

Had not St. Paul possessed a remarkably enterprising and undaunted spirit, he must have been obstructed in his holy career as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Called and qualified by God, to be a mighty engine in subverting the empire of darkness, he met with formidable opposition, wherever he went to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. But, like the sun in his course, he was not to be diverted from the path he was appointed to pursue. Holiness was the grand object at which he uniformly aimed, and to which he endeavored to conduct his hearers. He was not like those feeble and timid souls who are content with being mere novitiates in Christianity; but, launching into the deep things of God himself, he endeavored to present "every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

The better to facilitate his benevolent design, he urged the Corinthians to holiness, by presenting the law and the gospel in contrast. The law he denominates the ministration of death, because it ascertains sin, and condemns to condign punishment. But the gospel he calls the ministration of life, as its grand business is to proclaim the doctrine of justification, and to show how God can "be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Although there was a glory which attended the giving of the law upon Sinai, so that even the body of Moses partook of the effulgence, in such a manner that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the face of Moses; yet it was eclipsed by the superior glory of the gospel, which not only looks with equal abhorrence on sin, but furnishes a method to forgive it; to remove its guilt from the conscience; and

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entirely save the soul from its infection. The law, with its apparatus of ceremonies and sacrifices, was only a shadow or general outline of spiritual good; but the gospel is the substance or thing represented. The law detained its worshippers in the outward court, interdicting their approach to the superior privileges of the gospel, by a veil of types and shadows. But the gospel throws down the partition, and introduces the believer into the holy of holies. The disciples of Moses had a veil over their minds, so that they were ignorant of the spiritual meaning of their own law; but, under the Christian dispensation, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

These words lead us to contemplate

I. THE GRAND OBJECT PRESENTED IN THE TEXT.
II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BELIEVER RESPECTING IT.
III. THE EFFECT WHICH THIS VIEW PRODUCES.

I. THE GRAND OBJECT IN THE TEXT.

This is the glory of the Lord. What a stupendous contemplation for a finite mind! It is with hesitancy that the most improved intellect dares approach this abyss of divine wisdom, with no adequate means of acquiring a knowledge of its dimensions. "Who can by searching find out God?" But, although we may not expect to fathom the mystery involved in the divine perfections, yet we are permitted to gaze, wonder and adore. By the glory of the Lord, we are to understand his moral attributes, his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, veracity and mercy. But the refulgent glory of these perfections can no more be viewed *directly* by our moral vision, than the resplendent luminary of heaven can by the bodily eye.

"While thee, all infinite, I set,
By faith, before my ravish'd eye;
My weakness bends beneath the weight—
O'erpower'd, I sink, I faint, I die."

But in condescension to human weakness, and the better to assist our view of the divine glory, God has furnished us with a glass or mirror. The glory of the Lord is exhibited,

1. *In the works of creation.* "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The visible works of God as clearly refer to his invisible perfections, as any piece of mechanism does to the ingenious artist who wrought it. The immensity of these works declare his omnipotence; their vast variety and contrivance, his omniscience; their singular adap-

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tation to the most beneficent purposes, his infinite goodness. "The heavens," says the Psalmist, "declare the *glory* of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work." The language composing these truly eloquent lectures is too plain not to be understood; and so legible are their characters, that even the most unpolished and barbarous nations, who are destitute of skill, either in languages or letters, are able to comprehend their meaning. Indeed a man may as well doubt there is a sun, while surrounded at mid-day with the splendor he emits, as to question the existence of an infinitely wise and powerful being, while he devoutly contemplates the starry heavens. Could we accompany the astronomer while he wanders through the immeasurable fields of space, and see him take the dimensions of those ponderous planets which the night unfolds, and calculate their distances and revolutions, our souls would be illumined with a celestial radiance at a scene so sublime. The sun in the centre of the planetary system, surrounded with his primary or principal planets, and those with their secondary or accompanying satellites in their annual revolution, present such a view of the Creator's *glory*, as cannot fail to fill the devout mind with admiration and gratitude. When we contemplate a system of worlds, some of which are thousands of times larger than our earth, situated millions of miles from the central luminary, and travelling round it with the utmost regularity and exactness, with a velocity of thousands of miles every hour; what elevated conceptions must we have of that glorious being, who understands and applies the laws by which this stupendous system is governed!

"What though no real voice or sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found;
What though, in solemn silence, all
Move round our dark terrestrial ball;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing, as they shine,—
The hand that made us is divine."

If, descending from a contemplation of the starry heavens, we bend our attention to our globe and its productions, and take a view of the animals that move upon its surface, we shall behold the glory of God in every grade of animated and inanimate nature, from the feeble mite to the stately elephant, from the pebble to the snow-capt mountain. The air and water teem with life. And there is so much of God to be seen in the mechanical organization of the human frame, that even an Atheist, candidly contemplating it, must be cured, and with the devout Psalmist exclaim, "I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." Psalm cxxxix. 14.

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2. *A superintending providence shows the glory of the Lord.* The Lord has not formed the world by his wisdom, and then abandoned it and its inhabitants to the blind impulse of chance; but, like a forecasting and ever watchful machinist, he keeps every part of the vast and complicated machinery in order. Although the nature of that secret energy which governs both the natural and moral world may be involved in mystery to finite minds, yet we are not at liberty to question clearly authenticated fact, merely because we understand not the *manner* in which it is effected. To have a view of God's glory, as exhibited in the kingdom of providence, we are under no necessity of selecting those sudden and unexpected vicissitudes, which have occasionally astonished the nations, and directed their wandering attention to the hand of God. We need not have recourse to the history of worldly heroes, whose enterprising and ambitious spirit has prompted them to achievements which have cost the treasures and blood of nations. We may confine our observations to those whose earthly pilgrimage has passed in the humbler walks of life, and who have possessed nothing splendid to recommend them to public observation. Select, for example, the family of Jacob. Who would have supposed, when so dark a cloud hung upon his prospects, that such a course would have been pursued to raise him to competency, comfort, and respectability? But in this providence there was a wheel within a wheel, which, though not disclosed, was regularly revolving, to bring prosperity to the afflicted patriarch. His darling Joseph is taken from him; Simeon is detained as a hostage in a strange country; and a further demand is made for his beloved Benjamin. No wonder the venerable patriarch exclaimed, "All these things are against me!" But when he was restored to the embrace of his long lamented Joseph, the perplexing enigma was explained to his satisfaction.

It is in this way, that some apparently trivial occurrence sometimes conducts to a revolution even in a mighty empire. With much deliberation men project their favorite plans; they imagine every precaution has been taken, and adequate provision made against any evil that may be apprehended; and, after such prudent measures, they think every thing must be perfectly guarded and secure; but some little event, to which their eagle vision did not extend, has transpired, and lo! the whole course of things has taken a new direction, and blasted their highest hopes. Who can but see the hand of God in this! By the decree of Augustus, to enrol and tax the Roman empire, Joseph and Mary were called from their beloved obscurity: and thus the prophecy was accomplished that Messiah should be born at Bethlehem. Counter-currents may threaten to impede and turn out of its course the tide of human affairs; but the

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invisible hand of God guides and overrules its devious windings, till it is swallowed in the ocean of the divine design, the glory of God and the good of his devoted people.

That sin has marred the peace, disturbed the order, and sullied the glory of the moral world, is no argument against the perfection of God's government. He does not govern moral agents by an arbitrary exercise of power, as he does the planetary worlds. These, having no capacity to choose the course they describe, are kept in motion by that omnipotent Agent, who formed and gave them their original impulse. But man possesses a power to choose, will, determine and act. Without such a power, he could have no moral capacity, nor be under any moral obligation. A being who is not at liberty to act, cannot be denominated virtuous or vicious. It is this power of choice, that explains and vindicates God's conduct towards man as a moral agent. With respect to particular events, the divine government is sometimes so involved in obscurity, that it is difficult to satisfy ourselves as to the end proposed in certain arrangements; but when the mist scatters, we see that God had our greatest good in view, even in those dispensations which appeared to be against us. The cause of virtue and religion may seem at times to languish under the arm of oppression; serious godliness may be threatened by an overwhelming torrent of infidelity, so that we may be tempted to believe that God has abandoned the world to lawless anarchy, and no longer makes any distinction between vice and virtue. But while he suffers the wicked to triumph, it is that his justice may be the more conspicuously illustrated in the destruction of those who abuse his patience and long-suffering.

3. *But it is in the work of redemption that the divine attributes are most conspicuously declared and harmonized.* Here "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." But a limited view of this stupendous work nearly overpowers the human faculties, and we are constrained to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Redemption is the divine expedient to restore fallen man to the favor of his God, by virtue of the vicarious and sacrificial death of Christ, the incarnate Son of God. It signifies that we are covered from the avenging justice of God, by the atonement of Christ. We are bought off from the curse of the law, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The more clearly to discover the harmony of the divine attributes in this wonderful work, we must take a view of the wretched condition of man, at the time such an expedient became necessary. He was a fallen, guilty, helpless creature. Originally he was made in honor, and constituted

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governor of this lower creation. God designed to govern him by a holy law, suited to his nature, which entailed glory and eternal life, on perfect obedience; but indignation, and wrath, and eternal perdition, on the violation of this law. Man sinned, and fell under the curse. At such a flagrant act of rebellion, the injured Lawgiver could not stand an unmoved spectator. The earliest idea we form of God is, that he is a holy being, and possesses an infinite love of order, in every thing which tends to promote the good of the universe. He takes infinite complacency in his own work, because it is fit and right, and in accordance with his character; and every thing in his rational creatures which resembles his infinite rectitude, affords him satisfaction.

As sin had introduced so much disorder into his creation, God must be infinitely offended with it. And, in proportion to the intensity of displeasure which sin had produced in the divine mind, such arrangements would be adopted and pursued, as would be the most likely to convince the sinner of the dreadful effects of rebellion. And whatever course this might be, the mind cannot be too deeply impressed, that the restoration and promotion of moral order, and not the gratification of any angry passions or furious resentment, must be the grand object of the Lawgiver. We are not to suppose that the punishment of sin is a matter of arbitrary appointment, to gratify an unprincipled tyrant, but the deliberate demand of equity and justice. If there is any reason to be assigned, why respect should be paid to the laws and majesty of Heaven, the same reason vindicates the divine character and administration, after they have been insulted. It would be pouring the utmost contempt upon the wisdom of God, to suppose that he requires obedience to his commands, and yet takes no interest in supporting their authority against the insults of his subjects. An indiscriminate distribution of favor would evidently frustrate the design of moral government. Under such a relaxation of government, the consequences must be pernicious, not only in this world of free intelligences, but through the vast dominions of God. Indeed, it is essential to the honor and rights of Jehovah, that the evils threatened be inflicted upon the offenders, unless some other course can be devised, which will equally secure the honor of the divine government. That fallen, guilty, polluted, helpless man can make this satisfaction, no candid person will soberly contend. And as to that superior order of beings who never transgressed, they owe the full exercise of their angelic powers to their Maker, and hence can, by no works of supererogation, procure favor for the rebellious. It was in this state of things, when despair sat brooding on the saddened visage of the apostate race, that God's wisdom contrived, and his arm wrought, salvation for us. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

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Son" to be an expiatory sacrifice for sin. In this method, which grew out of the deep and unsearchable counsels of heaven, God hath shown mercy to man, and manifested his infinite displeasure at sin.

There were obstacles in the way of man's restoration to the divine favor, insurmountable on any principle but the scheme God had devised. The eternal Lawgiver has in the first outset declared, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and truth urges the faithfulness of God to execute the sentence upon the sinner. To rescind the decree would argue imperfection in Jehovah; to revoke the sentence would do violence to his own perfections: his justice demanded satisfaction for a violated law; his holiness rendered it necessary that he should show his utter abhorrence of sin; his truth stood pledged to execute the sentence which he had annexed to the violation of law; these secured no alternative for God, no hope for man. But Christ, by becoming our surety, removed all these impediments: he magnified the law, by enduring its penalties, and made it honorable, by obeying its commands; he also satisfied his Father's justice and holiness, and afforded to the universe the most awful and convincing proof, that sin cannot be committed with impunity. Here is a depth of wisdom and grace, at which heaven stands amazed! Well does the apostle exclaim, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Such glory was never before reflected on the divine perfections.

There was a manifest necessity for a mediator between God and man; and the wisdom of God is apparent in appointing his own Son for this important undertaking. To effect reconciliation between adverse parties, it is necessary that the mediator occupy an elevated stand, both in the esteem of the king, and in the public mind. But the "Mediator of the new covenant" is a being of infinite dignity. He is the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Thus qualified, he would not compromise or divide the blame; but demonstrating that it rested altogether with the rebellious subject, without qualification, he at once condemned the outrage. To insure success to his mediation, he was perfectly clear from participating in the offence; he was without sin, nor was guile found in his mouth. The extraordinary method resorted to by God, to introduce him amongst men, perfectly secured him from that moral infection, which has, through the fall, become natural to human nature. These are the things into which the angels desire to look: well may they be thought worthy to command the admiring contemplation of man.

II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BELIEVER RESPECTING IT; with open, or unveiled face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of

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the Lord, he is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. While Moses was carrying on his mediation with God in the mount, in behalf of the Israelites, he became adorned with such a miraculous radiance, from an emission of the divine glory, that, on his return, Aaron and the children of Israel were actually terrified. This glory carried with it the most convincing credentials that his professed correspondence with the Deity, in his absence from them, was something more than mere pretence. It became necessary for him to veil his face, in order to converse with the people. But Moses was not more veiled from the Israelites than is Christ from the sinner. The eyes of his understanding are darkened, so that, in his view, the adorable Saviour possesses neither form nor comeliness. Darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the hearts of the people. The veil of the covering is not circumscribed either to Jews or Gentiles; but is indiscriminately spread over all the earth. The works and providences of God, the most elegant pictures of the divine perfections, display the wisdom of their Author infinitely more than the most delicate touches of the pencil can the taste and ingenuity of the artist. But, like one shut up in a dark room, the sinner discovers no object; much less can he decipher the striking characters which surround him. All is to him involved in the thickest darkness. God is before and behind, and on either side of him, but he doth not perceive him. Reasoning man, calling in revelation to his aid, may carry his speculations upon the divine character to the highest pitch; but it will remain an immutable truth, that "the world by wisdom knows not God." But the believer has this veil removed, and without obstruction views the brightness of the Father's glory. A flood of divine light has burst upon his mind, and dispelled the moral gloom with which he was surrounded. The Lord has led him by a way he knew not; and now crooked things have become straight, and rough places smooth. He finds that many of the mysteries, and all the contradictions, which he supposed to have pervaded the Bible, are to be traced to the blindness and depravity of our fallen nature. Every object in the moral world to him wears an entirely new aspect. The precious volume of inspiration, over which he had so rapidly and heedlessly passed, without selecting a single gem, now appears like a rich and extensive mine, sparkling with diamonds of immense value. However imperfect his spiritual vision may be, there is no doubt attending the fact that he beholds the King in his beauty. He is now able to say, with confidence and delight, "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life." Beholding implies something more than a transient glance; it supposes a continued, improving

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view of the divine glory. The darkness and blackness which involved the frightful summit of Sinai, interspersed with flashes of lightning and gleams of fire, rendered it a terrible and repulsive object of contemplation. They could not endure that which was commanded; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But the gospel presents every thing which is inviting. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, an innumerable company of angels, the church of the first born, and, especially, Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, pouring out the blood of sprinkling, have so much that is attracting, invigorating, and comforting, associated with them, that it might be thought astonishing that any object of sense should ever divert our attention.

But although the believer beholds the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, yet, in this life, it is in a state of comparative imperfection; for it is as in a *mirror*. As a reflector, how highly soever polished, does not throw back upon the observer all the rays it concentrates, so neither do the works and ordinances of God convey to the pious worshipper the full amount of the divine glory; but this revelation is suited to his present circumstances. What the Lord said to Moses, though under an inferior dispensation, is equally applicable to the most cultivated believer, under the fullest dispensation of the Spirit: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see my face and live." Moses desired to see the unveiled and immediate majesty of God; but God declared no human being could bear it; hence, he laid his hand upon him, to conceal the overpowering effulgence; allowing him a view only of his back parts, or such rays as were tempered to his present condition. Our view here, even of earthly things, is very limited; how much more must it be of heavenly! And he who knows most, must confess that it is through a surrounding haze that he contemplates objects which afford him so much intellectual pleasure and improvement. Those giant intellects which have taken so wide a range through the fields of science, and, seemingly, grasped every thing to which human thought can reach, have, on a comparison of their scanty attainments with those of the inhabitants of heaven, felt and confessed their nothingness. But it is *faith* which gives a present subsistence to future and eternal things. This divine principle conveys to the mind that knowledge of God and heaven that human science can never furnish. Had the telescope been invented at the time the apostle wrote, we should have supposed he referred to something of that kind; for, as that instrument augments and brings distant objects near, so faith magnifies, and acquaints us with, the most distant objects in the moral firmament.

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"Faith lends its realizing light;
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
Th' Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye."

If an air of mystery should seem to brood over some parts of providence or revelation, and every particular respecting the introduction and expiation of moral evil is not explained to our entire satisfaction, it does not follow that these things are incapable of explanation, but that we are in a state of trial, and see things as in a mirror. In a probationary state there is room for the exercise of faith, patience, submission, and hope; but when death rends the veil of sense, and introduces the believer to the realities of heaven, there will be no demand for these graces. This is the infancy of our existence; and it is as unreasonable to expect that wide grasp of the vast and various operations of grace and providence, for which, at a future period, we may be prepared, as that an infant should suddenly acquire the knowledge and strength of a full grown man. "The wise Author of our existence," says Mr. Fletcher, "initiates us not immediately into the mysteries which lie concealed under many of our doctrines, for the very same reason that a mathematician conceals the most obscure parts of his science from the notice of his less intelligent pupils." But, with all the disadvantages under which the Christian labors, he hails a day which prophets and righteous men desired in vain to see. He beholds a glory in the cross of Christ which is hid from the wise and prudent of this world. The veil which intercepted his view of God reconciled to him in Christ, is rent from the top to the bottom; and he is no longer an outward court worshipper, but enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. He now clearly sees that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that righteousness cannot come by the law, nor pardon by the sacrifices, but by faith in "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." We now consider,

III. THE EFFECT WHICH THIS VIEW PRODUCES.

"We, beholding, are changed." This effect is,

1. *Rational.* There is in man a strong propensity to imitate. This has a greater influence than many suppose, in framing his character; for he becomes good or bad, happy or miserable, in proportion as he resembles the virtuous or vicious examples around him. And, indeed, many advantages result from this aptness to imitate, of which we should be totally deprived without it. But then the character, happiness, and salvation of man, depend much upon its due regulation. This appears to be the line of demarkation between vice and virtue. Overleap this boundary, and it becomes dangerous, if not

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fatal. The unsuspecting person approaches the company of the ignorant and vile, and perhaps nothing strikes him with greater horror than the idea that he shall ever be guilty of these abominations which he witnesses in others. But, gradually, he overcomes his reluctance to vice; his correct sentiments and habits are supplanted; and he can, without emotion, perpetrate those crimes at which he once shuddered. Associating with the infidel, he has lost his respect for that sacred volume which was the guide of his youth; and can, with flippancy, apply the infidel epithet of superstition and priestcraft to the religion of the Bible. Once he feared an oath; but in the school of vice he has inhaled the pestiferous fumes of the bottomless pit, and can now, with ease, belch forth the dialect of hell. He has become completely transformed into that very image upon which he once looked with a mixture of grief and indignation. On the contrary, those who choose godly companions are likely to imbibe their principles, and, like them, to become pure and elevated in their views and feelings. Whatever is pure, peaceable, and of good report in them, they almost insensibly transcribe into their own character. How radically transformed, then, must be the moral character of the man who steadfastly beholds the glory of the Lord! The brilliancy which Moses' countenance acquired, in consequence of his being with God forty days in the mount, is but a faint emblem of the glory impressed on the soul that holds communion with God. He views the divine perfections, and his impassioned soul goes out with desire to imitate whatever is imitable in the best of beings. In his admiring gaze he loses sight of every other object,—he forgets all minor concerns. Caught up, as it were, with Paul into the third heavens, or transported with the three disciples to the delightful summit of Tabor, he is favored with these views of God, which nearly overpower his faculties; and, in this heavenly place, he says, "It is good to be here." Now he feels the transforming energy of faith. His sensual nature dies, and he partakes of the divine nature. Beholding the wisdom of God, as displayed in creation, providence, and redemption, he becomes truly wise; contemplating his power, he puts on this divine panoply, and is thus prepared for the most violent assaults of his enemies. While musing upon the truth, mercy, holiness, and justice of God, these amiable qualities are impressed, as by the hand of Jehovah, upon his heart. Persuaded of God's love to him, he loves him who begat in return, and is disposed also to love those who are begotten of him, with a pure heart, fervently. Nor are his kind regards circumscribed entirely to the household of faith; but as "the Father of the spirits of all flesh" is loving and beneficent to every man, so his generous good will extends to the whole race of Adam.

2. *This effect is progressive.* He is "changed from glory to glory;" that is, he has a continued succession and increase of this

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glorious conformity to God. This work of grace is both progressive and instantaneous. As a man may be gradually dying some time before he actually expires, so, in the crucifixion of our old man, there is a painful course of mortification and heart-rending agony, until sin is separated from the soul. In that instant he is dead to sin; and, as the soul cannot remain a vacuum, it is *filled* with the love of God. The declining patient had passed through a gradual change, day after day; but how different and infinitely surpassing is the change wrought by death! And the change effected in the believer, when sin is destroyed, and he enters the rest of perfect love, infinitely surpasses all his former conceptions of this mighty work. When he was justified by faith, he met with a wonderful change; but he was chiefly struck with the dying love of his Saviour, and melted in view of his cross. He had peace with God, and love moving his heart to all the fallen race. He now concluded that all his enemies were slain, and that he should know darkness, unbelief, fear, and sorrow, no more. But God was preparing him for these severe spiritual conflicts, which were to ensue as the precursors of a glorious victory over sin. After the ecstasy which his translation into the kingdom of God had occasioned measurably subsides, he takes a more comprehensive and accurate view of the rectitude, purity, and love of God, and the plan of redemption; and is now convinced that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. He is pained to find in his heart so much that is unlike the ever blessed God; but, believing there is a sufficiency in the atoning blood to make him every whit whole, he repairs to it with all the agony of desire, and the confidence of faith, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." "Then Jesus touches him, saying, I will; be thou clean." He is now cleansed from all his filthiness, and separated from his idols; the heart of flesh is given him, and he is prepared in holiness and righteousness to serve God all the days of his life. Now the soul occupies its proper sphere in the moral firmament. Its eccentric wanderings have ceased; and, feeling the attractive force of the "Sun of righteousness," it constantly and regularly revolves around him as its centre. The desires, hopes, passions, and affections of the soul centre in God, and are swallowed up as a drop in the ocean. It is thus the believer is changed "from glory to glory." The leaven of holiness pervades the whole mass, and converts it into its nature; so that he is "filled with all the fulness of God."

3. *This work is spiritual*—"As by the Spirit of the Lord." It is not of works of righteousness that we are saved, but by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the *Holy Ghost*. We are *his* workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. God has so contrived the scheme of redemption, as to secure the glory of saving the sinner to *himself*; hence, says the apostle, "He that glorieth, let him glory

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in the Lord." The whole fabric of self-righteousness is prostrated in this great work of God. The boasting Pharisee may, with a self-approving smile, tell of his tithes, fastings, and prayers, and substitute these for spiritual regeneration; but God declares, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Though faith is the instrument by which this moral transformation is effected; yet the Spirit is the grand agent that worketh all in all. Not by wisdom, or by might, but by *my Spirit*, saith the Lord of hosts. Indeed, without the Spirit, no object can be presented to our moral vision. We know nothing of the excellency and glory of the Saviour, only as the Spirit reveals him. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit furnishes the instrument, or mirror, in which we behold the glory of the Lord; for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God; and holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We are equally dependent upon the Spirit for the faculty of vision; for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is in the light of the Spirit, that we discover the moral infection adhering to our natures, and joyfully espy the fountain for cleansing opened in the Redeemer's side. In the strength of the Spirit we contend against spiritual wickedness, so as to obtain victory. The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. He stamps the image of God upon our hearts, separates us to his service, and seals us unto the day of redemption. "In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance." "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us; written not with ink, but with the *Spirit* of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." The Spirit dwelling in the believer in all his vivifying, comforting, and sanctifying energy, is the peculiar glory of the Christian dispensation. Here the spiritual building is erected, adorned, finished to the top-stone, and filled with the glory of the invisible Deity.

Improvement.

1. *This subject assists us to form a right estimate of the gospel.* No other system can produce that moral transformation in man which is absolutely necessary to qualify him for heaven. Sinai may thunder and blaze, and spread terror and dismay around, forbidding even a-

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beast, at the peril of life, to approach; but it holds out no encouragement to the guilty and polluted—no shelter for the captive exile: it knows nothing of pardon, or the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The law makes sin appear exceedingly sinful; but it is the province of the gospel to pardon. "The law is our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith;" it cannot save, but conducts us to his door where alone salvation is to be found. Under its tuition, we find that all our righteousness is as filthy rags, and that our sacrifices, however numerous and costly, cannot put away sin. The gospel presents Christ crucified for us. This is the ground where we may safely cast anchor. There is no other name given under heaven, amongst men, whereby we can be saved. This, O sinner, is thy only hiding-place from the wind, and this thy only covert from the tempest of almighty wrath. Tarry not in the plain till overtaken by the Avenger of blood; but escape for thy life to Mount Zion, where the blood of sprinkling may pacify thy conscience, and wash away thy sin.

2. *We learn why Christians advance no faster in holiness.* It is not because they have not sufficient inducements and helps; but they do not *steadfastly* behold the divine glory. If occasionally they get, as it were, into the mount of transfiguration, they do not, by watchfulness and prayer, retain the impression they received; but, when duty calls them to descend amidst the attracting objects of sense, they let down their watch, and lose ground. It is abiding in the holy place, that we feel "all the silent heaven of love." If we rapidly pass a fire, we are but partially influenced by its heat; but if we stand where its full power may be felt, our whole system becomes so impregnated therewith, as to change our very color. God is a flame of love; and it is morally impossible for us to be in the habit of communing with him, and not be changed into the same image from glory to glory." Come, then, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, be not satisfied with being dwarfs in religion, but, in the strength of Jesus, determine to be giants in grace. Launch into the ocean of perfect love. Water the precious seed of truth with watchfulness and prayer, and, though as small and unpromising as the mustard seed, it will become a great and flourishing tree.

3. *We learn the importance of a steady faith in Christ.* A steady, unshaken confidence in the Saviour, is the fruit of an obedient faith. It is only by continuing rooted, grounded, and settled in the faith of the gospel, that we shall be able to *quench the fiery darts of the wicked*, and retain the enjoyment of pure and undefiled religion. Every thing to the Christian depends on a steady, abiding faith; its exercise secures his peace with God; by it he overcomes the world; and through it he is saved with a present salvation. It is by this faith that he is enabled to walk so as to please God, and make successful progress in the way to heaven. Through faith he subdues his foes,

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works righteousness, obtains promises, has his weakness made strong, waxes valiant in fight, and turns to flight the armies of the aliens. He presses onward towards the mark for the prize, and looks with earnest expectation for the help he needs to assist him to run so as to obtain. He has learned that it is impossible to succeed in the Christian warfare independently of the aid and interpositions of divine grace; he is more and more convinced of the truth of the Saviour's saying, that "without me ye can do nothing;" and that it is only by the strength he supplies through faith, that he shall be sustained through his present conflicts. If it were not for the power he receives through faith in Christ, his soul would sink into discouragement and despair; but, having learned to live and walk by faith, he knows exactly how to obtain the strength and assistance his case requires. He finds the only safety of his soul, as a Christian, is in looking to Jesus.

Finally. Permit me to inquire, At what are you looking? At the splendor of this world? It is not strange that Satan should hold out to you this gaudy bait, and promise you, as he did the Saviour, If thou wilt worship me all shall be thine. But that you be not seduced, remember, "all these things shall be dissolved; for the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." What will sustain your hope, when the mountains melt at the presence of God? Where can you find a refuge, but in the pavilion of the Almighty, when worlds on worlds shall be blended in promiscuous ruin? Take another look at religion, before you consent to part with her for ever. Whose image and superscription hath she? Your reason and conscience supply the answer. "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's."

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SERMON X.

BY THE LATE REV. JAMES SMITH,

OF THE BALTIMORE CONFERENCE.

PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL REQUEST

ON THE INCAPACITY OF THE NATURAL MAN TO RECEIVE THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS II. 14.

BUT THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVETH NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD: FOR THEY ARE FOOLISHNESS UNTO HIM: NEITHER CAN HE KNOW THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED.

ST. PAUL speaks, in this chapter, of two species of wisdom. The one he denominates the wisdom of man, which he disclaims in the exercise of his ministry; the other he calls the wisdom of God, from which he professes to derive his resources as a minister of Jesus Christ. He urges, that "*the princes of this world*" *were ignorant of this wisdom*, and alleges in evidence, their having "*crucified the Lord of Glory.*" He also maintains, that man, by the exercise of his own unassisted faculties, is, from the nature of the subject, utterly incapable of discovering originally, or of fairly appreciating when declared, "*the*" *blessings* "*which God hath prepared*," and in the gospel announced, "*for them that love him.*" In illustration of this idea, he introduces our text; "*For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" Before we enter upon the discussion of the principles laid down in the text, it may be proper to fix the sense of some of the phrases employed in it. First, when it is said, "*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,*" &c., it may be proper to ascertain what is meant by the natural man.

As to the character of the truly natural man, there is some diver-

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sity of opinion. Some suppose that man in his truly natural state, was a religious creature; and that the disorders, which distinguish human nature in its present condition, are but so many corruptions of it, and are, properly speaking, *unnatural*. To this idea, when properly understood, we have nothing to object. But St. Paul here speaks of the natural man as his character is made known to us by experience: in that vitiated and mortal state which characterizes the race which Adam propagated after his fall from his pristine purity and dignity. Secondly, when it is said, "*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*," &c., we are not thence to conclude that he is incapable of being brought, through any agency whatever, within the ordinary compass of providence and grace, to a correct understanding of them; but that, by the exercise of his own natural faculties, without the agency of the Spirit of God, he is incapable of acquiring such knowledge. Having premised thus much, let us inquire,

1. What are the things of the Spirit, of which the apostle speaks. In general, we conceive, they are those peculiarities in Christian experience, which are effectuated in the human character, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the freedom of the human will, in the work of the soul's salvation. Let us contemplate them, 1st, with respect to the awakened sinner, in reference to his *sense of religious truth, the remorse of his conscience*, and the fears which terrify and alarm him. The Spirit of grace in bringing the divine law home to the human heart in its spiritual application to the inmost workings of the soul, as well as the external actions, awakens the sinner to a just apprehension of the turpitude of his guilt, and the imminence of his danger; while it produces in his bosom a deep feeling of remorse, and "*fearful looking for*" of "*fiery indignation and wrath to come.*"

Of these *views, feelings*, and *apprehensions*, the natural man is ignorant. He cries peace, when God has not spoken peace. He presumes on his personal safety, while certain destruction is gathering, and lowering over his exposed head. St. Paul sets forth this idea, in the most commanding point of light, in his Epistle to the Romans. See chap. 7th, &c. He says, "*I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*" He here states, that he was alive, as a Pharisee, without a spiritual application of the divine law to his conscience, but when the commandment came home to his bosom and his case, sin revived, accumulated strength, and slew all his hopes of salvation by the merit of his own works. That this was the apostle's meaning is evident; for he was, speculatively, well acquainted with the law or commandments, during a considerable period of his life; being educated "*at the feet of Gamaliel*," a Jewish Rabbi. When did "*the commandment come?*"

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When, on an expedition of persecution, infuriated by a false, a mistaken zeal, to exterminate, if possible, the infant Christian church from the face of the earth, a voice from heaven reached, not only his external ear, but his inmost soul, crying, "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*" It was then he identified the doctrines of the gospel with the truth of God. It was then he felt that he was a sinner deserving the damnation of hell. "*Sin revived,*" acquired a power to slay him by arraigning him at the bar of the divine law as spiritually applied to the inmost recesses of his heart, as well as to his exterior deportment of *irreligion* and *impiety*, thundering out its denunciations against his guilty soul. It was then, he felt he was dead in law, while "*sin revived*" and slew all his hopes of salvation by deeds of law; and his inquiry was, "*Lord, what wilt* THOU *have me to do?*" Whether St. Paul is here speaking of his own case, *personally*, or personating that of another, awaking to a sense of his danger, by means of the spiritual application of the law to his heart, it is equally in point to our present argument. And thus enlightened to see his danger, the awakened sinner feels the deepest and most pungent remorse, on the remembrance of his past sins; conscience wrings him with the deepest anguish, while his fears operate as an active and vigorous incitement on him, to flee from the wrath to come. The unutterably important question, "*What shall I do to be saved?*" is revolved in his mind with the deepest and most heartfelt interest.

2d. The second article we propose to notice, as among the "*things of the Spirit* which *the natural man receiveth not,*" may be designated as that faith whereby a penitent sinner lays hold on the divine promise, "*believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,*" and through the promise, upon God in Christ Jesus as his covenant God, claiming in Jesus Christ the righteousness of faith—realizing the blood, righteousness, intercession of the Saviour, as furnished on his behalf, prevailing in the court of Heaven for his emancipation and pardon. Of this faith it is said, "*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" It is a faith, which very much, if not chiefly, depends on the moral disposition of the soul. It may be justly deemed one of "*the things of the Spirit of God,*" with reference both to its *means* and its *excitement*. The truth which it embraces is from the inspiration of God originally, and as presented to the mind of man at any given time, his discernment of it, so as to take a firm grasp on it, may justly be regarded as a fruit of gracious, personal illumination by the Holy Spirit. For, although the human mind may, and no doubt does, act freely, in the exercise of this faith on the Son of God for pardon and acceptance, yet is it graciously assisted, succored and promoted in its exertions, by the

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Holy Spirit, *enlightening* and *exciting* it to this important and deeply responsible duty. This principle of faith is carried forward in its exercise to embrace other and higher objects of its confidence: such, as God in Christ, as the believer's reconciled Father, as the ground upon which he sends forth the spirit of his Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father: such, as the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit cleansing the heart from moral pollution, and indeed, the subject, "*from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, enabling him to perfect holiness in the fear of God:*" such, as the fulfilment of the divine promises, that Jehovah will not suffer his children to be tempted more than he will enable them to bear, but will with the temptation make a way for their escape: such, as that the "*Lord God*" will be to them "*a sun and a shield;*" that "*he will give*" them "*grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from them:*" such, as assuring them that if their "*earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,*" they "*have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens:*" such, as the assurance that, "*when he*" (Jesus Christ) "*shall appear,*" they "*shall be like him,*" *for* "*they shall see him as he is:*" such, as though "*it*" (the body of his saints) "*is sown a natural body,*" "*it is to be raised a spiritual body,*" though "*it is sown in dishonor, it is*" to be "*raised in glory.*"

3d. A third object which may be regarded as one of the *things of the Spirit*, of which our text speaks, is the witness of the Spirit, by which the believer is assured of his acceptance as a child of God. "*Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*"

This witnessing Spirit operates upon the *heart by imparting to it* "*peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*" A peace not fanciful, but substantial; not transient, but permanent, free from the pangs of a remorseful conscience, free from the thunders of the law—peace in relation to the divine character and government; peace with all mankind. This is a peace, too, which, as an object of speculation, "*passeth understanding;*" it is a peace which the mere reason of man, not enlightened by evangelical experience, cannot understand: a peace which can only be fathomed, if it can fully even then, by means of experience in the heart. A fine writer defines it to be, "*a divine taste of the powers of the world to come.*" A love to God, which implies a holy reverence for him, the warmest gratitude to him, with a strong sentiment of moral esteem of him, associated with a sense of his approbation pervading the whole soul, and leaving not a doubt that its highest, and only felicity, is in him, and from him, and strictly connected with, and arising out of pleasing him, as the business of existence.

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A "*joy in the Holy Ghost.*" Not such as flows from wine; not such as arises from the gathering in of the first fruits; but a "*joy in the Holy Ghost.*" A joy in its character and in its effects worthy of its divine Original: it also is "*holy,*" not irregular; rational, not enthusiastic; permanent, not transitory; benevolent, not persecuting. By these effects, or fruits, does the "*Spirit of God's Son testify in the hearts of believers that they are sons, and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ, if so be that they suffer with him, that they may be also glorified together.*" But these effects of the Holy Spirit are unknown "*to the natural man;*" he "*receiveth them not.* And why? Because, in the sense of our text, he *discerneth them not.* And on the same account they appear "*foolishness to him.*"

II. This brings us to the second general item in our subject; which is, to inquire why the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and why they appear foolishness to him? In reply to the first of these questions, we would lay it down as a full and complete answer, and at the same time as an axiomatic principle in theology, that the knowledge of these things can only be acquired by means of experience, which experience he has not. The knowledge of some natural truths can be obtained by experience only; while the knowledge of others is obtained by reasoning, deducing other truths from truths already known. And this principle holds with respect to moral and religious, equally as with natural, truths. The blind man cannot reason about colors, because his reason has no data furnished it by experience, upon which he might proceed. And so, in like manner, we may suppose the case of a man possessed of all the other faculties and affections of human nature, except the passion of love, but this was sternly denied him by nature: of course, he had never felt its exercise upon any one object whatever. In such case, he would be as radically incapable of conceiving of such a passion, or the sensation peculiarly distinguishing its exercise, as the blind man would be of judging of colors. And for the same reason, he would be incapable of reasoning correctly about it, or of drawing any just conclusion concerning it. But let us now, for a moment, suppose the case of a man who had been conscious, a thousand times, of the exercise of this passion upon created objects, but had never once felt its action, evangelically speaking, towards the Divine Being. Let us suppose him to make the inquiry within himself, and endeavor to form an idea of the action of this passion, and of the sensation accompanying it, when exercised towards the Divine Being; and what clue can we suppose him to be in possession of to direct his judgment? Perhaps it will be replied, analogy: well, be it so; but we would take leave to re-

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mark, that this doctrine (we mean the doctrine of analogy) has, perhaps, occasioned many an erroneous idea to be formed of religious enjoyment. For, it ought to be recollected, that our love of objects, in general, when not perverted by corruption, rises in proportion to our conception of their excellencies. But what conception has the natural man of the divine perfections? It is true, he is obliged to admit, in a process of reasoning, that those perfections are infinite and immense, from the impossibility of its being otherwise; but his positive perceptions of them are, doubtless, but very poor; especially of the divine holiness, until his mind is irradiated by divine illumination.

"*The natural man*" is but ill qualified, or rather, perhaps, utterly unqualified, from the moral and religious condition of his mind and heart, to form any thing like a correct judgment of the height, to which the sacred passion of love, as exercised by the experienced Christian, towards the Creator, may be, and is in fact raised, when the corruptions of his heart are so far corrected, that *it* moves in delightful accordance with the dictates of his enlightened understanding. And equally, and for the same reason, is he incapable of conceiving of the heart-felt and truly divine felicity which accompanies the exercise of such a sacred passion, under such circumstances, towards so sublime an object. This subject is placed still more remote from the apprehension of the natural man, from the consideration that, in this matter, there is a reciprocal movement of the love of the Christian believer, as exercised by himself towards *the adorable Creator;* and the love of God to him, as exercised by the Almighty towards him; and upon him, shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him. And all this accompanied by a delightful and satisfactory assurance that it is so. In speaking of the love of God towards the believer, in this case, we do not mean simply, the love of benevolence, or that of beneficence; but, also, that of complacency; which implies approbation of, and pleasure in, its object. What a source of personal felicity to the Christian believer, must be this reciprocal love of God to him, and the best affections of his heart yielded up to God, sanctified by the blood of the covenant, and the renewing Spirit of holiness! And by how much it is a source of his personal happiness, by just so much must the natural man be incompetent to judge of the amount of *his* happiness. And thus it appears, that the knowledge of certain *religious truths*, as well as of natural ones, is acquired by the human mind, not by means of study, but *experience* only. What we have said of the love of God in this discussion, will also hold in general, of all the articles before noticed, as supposed to be included in "*the things of the Spirit of God*," of which the apostle affirms that "*the natural man receiveth them not.*" And this conclusion is supported by all the analogies of the human mind, with which we are acquainted

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The student recently from college, with a mind richly stored with speculative science, but almost utterly destitute of the chastisements and corrections of experience, fancies he knows every thing to be known by the mind of man. But experience, when he enters upon the theatre of life, presently assures him that he is yet liable to be imposed on by every practical intriguer with whom he may have to do. Experience has her own legitimate department of instruction to her pupils, in every line of human interest, which she is jealous never to yield; and no advantages of *genius*, or *science*, or *literature*, can supersede her claims. And can it be thought strange, that religion, in this respect, should stand upon a par with every other object of human interest? We think it ought not. And conducted as we are to this conclusion, as we think, by a fair investigation of the subject, we ought no longer, perhaps, to be astonished, or to conceive it unaccountable, that the natural man *receiveth not*—understandeth not, "*the things of the Spirit of God.*" Moreover, the preceding views of the subject may also furnish us with a clue to account for the error into which evangelical believers are sometimes betrayed, immediately on being visited by the Spirit of witness, with convincing demonstration of their acceptance with God as sons. They, in such circumstances, often conclude, perhaps, that they could convince every man, with whom they should converse on the subject, both of the *truth* and the infinite *importance* of religion. One, in such circumstances, thinks if he could convey his ideas into the mind of another, he could no longer resist the authority of divine truth. And, possibly, there is not so much illusion in this view of the subject, as at first we might imagine. If he could, *indeed*, drop his ideas of religion into the mind of another, and at the same time awaken in his bosom similar feelings to his own, it would, probably, be utterly impracticable for him, in such circumstances, to resist the truth. But his friend can neither do the one nor the other. For, although he may use the words which stand for the simple ideas that are in his own mind, or a combination of them into complex or compound ones, yet those words cannot produce in the mind of that other any definite conceptions beyond what he himself had experienced. And of course, his ideas of religious *experience* and *enjoyment* must be imperfect both in point of character and intensity. And, at the same time, being entirely destitute of the feelings which peculiarly distinguish the religious experience of the other, he remains partially ignorant, and almost wholly unmoved, often to the utter astonishment of his friend. Moreover, we might here add, in illustration of the principles already laid down, that, in proportion as the natural man sins away the effects of the visiting Spirit of divine grace, as "*the light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,*" in the same proportion does his mind become more and more dark and deluded on the subject of experimental religion

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This arises out of the fact, that the light thus afforded, and thus sinned against, becomes more and more extinguished "*through the deceitfulness of sin*," as the practice of sinning is indulged in, and the admonitions of this sacred light resisted; till the sinner, thus pressing down the declivity of vice, is apt at length to become the intrepid hero in the cause of irreligion, if not the decided *advocate* of ungodliness and infidelity. And, accordingly, we often find great acuteness of discernment, and great information on other subjects, associated in the same individual, with great ignorance, or *greater error*, on the subject of religion; especially experimental religion.

But it is also said in our text, that "*the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man.*" And in the light of *folly*, or *absurdity*, must objects ever appear to the human mind, when the imagination attempts to grasp them while the understanding is not furnished with sufficient data respecting them to direct the judgment. The judgment determines concerning them, in such case, according to the views it is able to take, or has taken; and these views being constituted of combinations and associations which are foreign from the truth, they are apt, of course, to be stamped with absurdity. For the mind of the natural man (as has been already shown), with respect to "*the things of the Spirit of God*," lacks correct simple ideas, and, of course, lacks knowledge on that subject; as all our knowledge is made up of correct simple ideas. For, though the natural man has some ideas of *deep contrition for sin, of faith in the Son of God, of the witness of the Spirit*, &c., yet has he not just and adequate ones; nor can he acquire them but by means of experience. By a combination of false or defective ideas he may obtain error, or, rather, fall into it; but he can never, by such means, attain the knowledge of the truth. Out of such false, simple ideas, the mind makes combinations that are unnatural and untrue, in religious experience; and, of course, they are apt to take on the character of absurdity. And this effect is the more likely to take place, in proportion as the truth in question is placed more remote from the capacity of the human mind to grasp it, independent of foreign aid. And this is eminently the fact in the case under consideration; we mean the case of the natural man attempting to scan "*the things of the Spirit of God*," or of Christian experience: which things are effectuated through the agency of the Spirit of grace, whose influence is essentially necessary to a correct understanding of them. And *this* is the very reason, assigned in the text, *why* "*the natural man, as such, receiveth them not, and why they appear as foolishness to him.*" "BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED."

This leads us to inquire, for a moment, *into the nature of spiritual discernment*. Spiritual discernment, we conceive, is that capacity which is afforded the human mind by means of spiritual illumination,

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whereby it is enabled to discern the things of the Spirit of God, and appreciate them, in their true character, as being, what in truth they are, so far from being foolishness, that they are a display of both "*the wisdom of God and the power of God*:" or, in other words, spiritual discernment may be defined to be that capacity to discern religious objects and truths which the mind of man has when aided by the divine *quickening* and *illuminating* influences of the Spirit of grace. God has exposed some truths to the apprehension of man, without the aid of divine illumination; while others are concealed from it, and must, perhaps, ever remain so, unless the Almighty condescend to enlighten his mind by an influence truly divine. It is generally conceded, we believe, that philosophy was incapable of discovering those sublime truths which revelation hath *announced* and *confirmed*. And it is equally true that, with this system of divine revelation, we mean the Bible, in our hands, we are utterly incapable of discerning and appreciating its sublime excellencies, without the aid of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our understandings and sanctify our moral feelings. "*Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures.*" Luke xxiv. 45. In this light are we to understand our apostle in the text, when he says of the things of the Spirit, that they are spiritually discerned. The knowledge of those truths of religion, then, which specially concern feeling, can only be acquired by means of feeling, as those truths which concern experience in general can only be learned by means of experience in general. And as the work of the Holy Spirit, in awakening the conscience, in enlightening the understanding, in sanctifying the heart, in shedding abroad the love of God in it by the Spirit of adoption—affording the evidences of sonship to the believer, imparting an "*earnest of the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of the glory of his grace*"—an earnest of the inheritance of the saints in light, is a subject of experience; and as the knowledge of experimental truths can only be acquired by means of experience, the inexperienced, the unconverted, the "*natural man*," can form no adequate conception of them. With some inferences and improvement, we will conclude our observations.

First—The natural man ought not to conclude his case a safe one, because he does not discern the danger to which superior wisdom, divine inspiration, has declared he is exposed: and for this plain reason,—that he is not in a religious condition to discern the danger to which he is exposed. The subject of his inquiry, as it includes the "necessity and evidences" of the new birth, is involved in the *things of the Spirit of God*, which our text affirms "*the natural man receiveth not.*"

Secondly—The natural man ought to seek to obtain the knowledge of those experimental truths of religion which, in our text, are *emphatically* called the things of "*the Spirit of God*," by experience,

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and not *merely*, if indeed *at all*, by speculation and reasoning, apart from evangelical experience; since, by such means it cannot be acquired. And as discomfiture and discouragement are the usual consequences of engaging in the pursuit of any object improperly, we ought to be peculiarly careful that we engage in the pursuit of so important an object as that of religious truth correctly; that we may have the greater probability of prosecuting our object with success. And since so much depends upon the agency and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit in the prosecution of the object in question, how diligently ought every inquirer to look, and sincerely pray, in the use of all the appointed means of grace, for his gracious influences to guide his *footsteps*, and conduct his humble and depending exertions to a successful result! And, as a further inducement to encourage his exertions in this holy pursuit, let it be remembered that God, in a thousand instances, has promised his Spirit's aid to all those who humbly, sincerely, and perseveringly "*seek and strive*" after it. "*Hitherto ye have asked nothing*," said the Saviour, "*ask, that your joy may be full.*" Again—"*if ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*"

Thirdly, as a further improvement of the doctrine laid down, how careful ought experienced believers to be, that they lose not those "*things of the Spirit of God*," set forth in our first general article of this discussion, and relapse, through the influence of vice, into the condition of "*the natural man.*" The evil against which we caution such is, we conceive, so far from being impossible, that, perhaps, few things in the department of Christian experience is more common, than for it to take place in a greater or less degree. St. Peter appears to consider it possible for such as had "*been enlightened, and tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, so far to relapse, as to forget that they were purged from their old sins.*" And this, perhaps, is not so difficult a thing as some, at first view, might imagine. The memory of man, like all his other faculties, is but frail at best, even when employed in reporting facts of sensible evidence, which species of evidence, in general, is more easily retained, in all its force, than that which is purely intellectual and abstract. But of the latter character, is the immediate evidence of the pardon of sin, generally called the witness of the Spirit. And it is this species of evidence upon which our confidence of acceptance with God, for a considerable period after conversion, chiefly rests. And, although this evidence is not the only one upon which the believer's confidence of pardon *ultimately* rests, yet we are very much inclined to think it is the chief one to which his attention is directed, whenever the question is agitated in his own mind, whether his sins are pardoned or not, throughout the period of his probationary state. And if he do not have his confidence renewed, and his memory fre-

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quently refreshed by the same gracious agency—the Holy Spirit of witness quickening his soul, producing "*peace, love,* and *joy in the Holy Ghost,*" we can easily conceive that, after the lapse of a considerable period of time spent without the enjoyment of the comforts of religion, and much more, if it be spent in *vice* and *licentiousness,* that the evidence of the fact of his conversion, under such circumstances, might be so far effaced from his mind, that it might be a doubtful question, even with himself, whether the pardon of his sins were a *genuine fact,* or only a creature of imagination. And, as a further confirmation of this doctrine, we would remark, that there are, perhaps, but comparatively few conversions but what more or less are doubted by the subjects of them, within the period of a few days after they take place. And we would appeal to the testimonies of the living, and the memoirs of the dead, for the truth of the sentiment, if the doubts of such are not dispelled by the same gracious agency by whose evidence their confidence of acceptance was, at first, chiefly produced: we mean the witness of the Spirit: and if the established confidence of such are not formed and confirmed by repeated operations of the same gracious Spirit, imparting clear and living evidence of their sonship to God? And we might venture a similar appeal to all living evangelical believers, if it be not by the lustre which this heavenly visitant sheds upon their minds, and with which he refreshes their memories, that their confidence, both of *past pardon* and present acceptance, is supported and confirmed? And that if, without this, both the one and the other would not, in process of time, become doubtful; and finally the one, that is their present acceptance, be disbelieved, because not true, and the other, as St. Peter seems to intimate of some, become, in all probability, forgotten.

Although we have, in this discourse, chiefly directed our attention, when speaking of a genuine religious experience, to the witness of the Spirit, because our discussion seemed to call our attention chiefly to that view of the subject; yet, let it not from hence be inferred that we place a slight reliance on the evidence of *our own spirit,* or *conscience.* We admit, and rejoice in the fact, that when the graces of the Spirit in the believer's heart, and the corresponding virtues in his life, are formed and established, he, by perceiving the coincidence between his own religious character and the Christianity of the New Testament, rationally infers the truth of his own personal religion. And we are also aware, that this use of his reason is ordinarily made at a very early period after he is afforded the first visit of the witnessing Spirit, manifesting itself in "*peace, love,*" and "*joy in the Holy Ghost.*" But still, without the witness of the Spirit at first manifested in "*peace, love,*" and "*joy* in the Holy *Ghost,*" the data for such an inference would never have been furnished in his experience and character, nor will that data be continued, without the repeated visitations of the same heavenly witness in his heart.

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SERMON XI.

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THE EVILS OF INTEMPERANCE.

PROVERBS, XX. 1.

WINE IS A MOCKER, STRONG DRINK IS RAGING; AND WHOSOEVER IS DECEIVED THEREBY IS NOT WISE.

MUCH has been said and written on the important subject of temperance. The ground has been occupied by those who have done so ample justice to the subject, that it no longer has the charm of novelty to recommend it to the consideration of the public. While, however, it has lost this temporary auxiliary to its success, it has gained an important position in the public mind, and is now exerting a most happy and saving influence over the moral habits of thousands of the inhabitants of the United States.

From the venerable Wesley, who was among the first and most efficient who proclaimed open war against intemperance, to the late efforts of temperance societies, this subject has been most ably handled in almost every point of view. Notwithstanding this, however, it is the indispensable duty of every lover of God and man to set his face against this growing and destructive evil of the present day, and help to reiterate the voice of warning from one end of this vast continent to the other.

This is the more necessary, as the vice of intemperance has, of late years, assumed a more bold and daring stand, and unblushingly carries on its work of destruction in the very face of the sun. Neither the thunders of the divine law, nor the disapprobation of public sentiment, have yet been able either to drive or shame this vice from the land. Time was, indeed, when it was deemed so disgraceful for a man to be guilty of intoxication, that those who were "drunken, were drunken in the night;" but, at this age of improvement and refinement, this vice has received, and does still so often receive, the sanc-

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tion of the daylight examples of many of the rich and otherwise influential parts of society, that it is no uncommon thing to see men lying intoxicated in our streets in open day. Public sentiment is not yet sufficiently armed with the terrors of disgrace and infamy to drive this vile practice into the darkness of midnight; but, should the efforts which are now making go on with a steady tide of successful operation, the time, we trust, is not far distant, when intemperance shall again take its proper place and character among the "unfruitful works of darkness." This I say, because drunkenness we shall ever have, while sin, strong drink, and sinners are found on the earth. I view the idea to be of the most chimerical character, to suppose that while these remain, intemperance will ever be *wholly* exterminated from the earth. No; while we have temperate drinkers, we shall ever be infested with drunkards: for the latter are manufactured from the former. Much, however, may be done, and, indeed, much has already been done, to lessen the magnitude of this national calamity, and produce the happiest effects on society. Many a female heart has been disburdened of an almost insupportable load of grief, at the reformation of an intemperate husband. Many a parent, whose gray hairs a profligate son was bringing down with sorrow to the grave, has been made to rejoice and say: "It is enough—Joseph, my son, is yet alive;" Rejoice with me, for "my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." Many a habitation, before as desolate and dreary as the very chambers of death, has been lighted up with the lamps of prosperity and the smiles of friendship. Yea, through the instrumentality of the friends of temperance, many a brand has been plucked from this all-devouring fire, and given back, with great rejoicings, to the bosoms of his friends, and to the church of God. And, to insure success, this work must still be pursued. There must be "line upon line, and precept upon precept."

I deem this a proper and convenient opportunity to vindicate that religious denomination to which I have the honor to be attached, against an unkind, and, as we think, false insinuation, lately thrown out at a temperance meeting, namely, That the Methodists, as a denomination, are opposed to the cause of temperance. This insinuation was the more unlooked for, as the Methodist Episcopal church is probably the only church on the continent (unless it should be the Friends') whose discipline makes total abstinence from ardent spirits, except in cases of necessity, a condition of church membership. This insinuation, therefore, comes with rather an ill grace from those who have got so late into battle against the common enemy; and looks too much like an effort to cast dust upon their fellow-soldiers in order to hide their own former delinquency. Be this, however, as it may; we leave it, and rejoice that the different denominations are waking up to this important subject, and heartily bid them God-speed in the good

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work of reforming drunkards, and preventing the sober from becoming such. That the Methodist Episcopal church has not viewed the cause of temperance in an indifferent light, nor treated the subject with utter neglect, is evident, not only from the numerous instances of success in the reformation of the intemperate, with which it has pleased God to bless the labors of that church, but also from the fact that, as early as the year 1739, total abstinence from spirituous liquors, except in cases of necessity, was made one of the conditions of admission to, and continuance in, the Methodist societies.

And when those societies which had been formed in America were, in the year 1784, formed into a distinct and independent church, this rule in relation to temperance, together with two others upon the same subject, was incorporated into the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal church, and have ever since occupied a place among the standing rules of that church.

When we have said thus much, not by way of boasting, but to clear ourselves from the insinuation above referred to, we are ready to acknowledge that we have by no means done all we might, with the means in our hands, to stop this prevailing evil. We might have preached more frequently and more pointedly against this crying sin. We might have excommunicated every temperate drinker from the bosom of the church, and thus have rolled away the reproach from Zion. God forgive us, and help us no longer to be guilty of our brother's blood. We now invite the serious and prayerful attention of the reader to the specific object of the present discourse—To ENUMERATE SOME OF THE EVILS OF INTEMPERANCE.

1. *Wine is a mocker.*

Wine, or the simple juice of the grape expressed, was probably the only intoxicating liquor used by the ancients. The distillation of ardent spirits, by a chemical process, owes its invention to a more modern date; and is, doubtless, among the "many inventions" sought out by man, in his departure from that original rectitude in which he was first created. We use the term wine at present, however, as a general term, including in it every species of intoxicating liquor used by men at the present day. We are not to understand by this expression of the inspired writer, that ardent spirits, of themselves considered, have any more deleterious effects upon the human character or constitution than arsenic, or any other substance, either of the mineral or vegetable kingdom. Wine will mock no man, if it be carefully abstained from. It is only when provoked and irritated by the hard usage of the intemperate, that it becomes an enemy to the reputation and constitution of mankind. Hence the expression is rather to be understood of the *intemperate use* of ardent spirits, than of any intrinsic evil existing in the substance itself.

By the creative energy of an inimitable figure, the sacred writer

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has here given to the vice of intemperance a kind of personification. There is attributed to it all the intellect and intelligence, all the good sense and sobriety, and all the decency and good behavior of the drunkard. It is represented as employing these powers and faculties in the contemptuous ridicule of poor human nature. And, surely, there never was a truer character given of intemperance. Man, undegraded by this contemptible vice, is a noble structure, whether we contemplate his body or his mind. He is characterized by intelligence, by a faculty of reasoning, by an accurate judgment in many things, and by a power of communicating the secrets of his heart to his fellow beings. But in each of these he suffers material loss by intemperance. If he have been a man of knowledge and general intelligence, his knowledge, by inebriation, is reduced to the circumscribed limits of an idiot. Though his giant mind was able to grasp the most profound subjects, and reason upon them with the most philosophical accuracy, intemperance paralyzes these noble powers, and leaves its poor, degraded victim, at best but the mere wreck or shadow of his former self. Had he the reputation of a man of a sound judgment, in matters which concern church or state? intemperance has blasted that reputation, and left the miserable wretch without either public or private confidence. Was his conversation intelligent and instructive? and did his friends and neighbors listen with profound respect to the communication of his wisdom? Alas, how changed! Intemperance has played the fool with his understanding, and left him the object of commiseration to the wise and good, and of jesting and ridicule to the rude sons of folly and vice. Who, that ever listened for five minutes to the incoherent and unintelligent jargon of the swelled tongued drunkard, but was deeply convinced of the truth of the wise man's assertion, "Wine is a mocker?" And how often are its effects such upon the human body, in relaxing and paralyzing its muscular powers, that, that noble edifice designed to be the habitation of an immortal soul, and the indwelling of the Deity, is thrown from its erect posture to a level with the meanest brutes of the earth. "How are the mighty fallen!" At the feet of this gigantic monster lay, in a promiscuous mass of ruins, the acute philosopher, the able statesman, the useful physician, the gentleman of the bar, and, we regret to say, sometimes the learned and otherwise able divine. These, together with a mixed multitude of rich and poor, high and low, white and black, male and female, have all been offered in sacrifice to Bacchus; while, around his altar, yet smoking with ten thousand victims, the friends of God, of humanity, and of their country, stand in silent grief, or break forth into strong cries and tears, saying, "Spare thy people, O Lord, nor give thy heritage to reproach."

Whether, then, we view intemperance in its immediate effects on the intellectual or physical system of man, or in the general character

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which it stamps upon him, the truth of the proposition is abundantly sustained. Intemperance degrades and mocks human nature; it assimilates its victim into its own image and likeness, constitutes him a mocker, and renders him the object of derision and sport to the rude youth of every place.

2. *Intemperance is inflammatory in its effects*—"*strong drink is raging.*"

This proposition is fully sustained, whether it be laid down in relation to the *body* or the *mind* of man. By intemperance I would not only understand the use of ardent spirits to entire intoxication, but also the free and habitual use of it where no such *immediate* effects follow. I consider every stage of intemperance, from the commencement of temperate drinking to the confirmed habit of intoxication, only as so many types of the same dreadful moral disease, wherever it prevails. In the human system the utmost order, harmony, and dependency of parts is observable; and it is equally apparent that this order must be preserved, or the most alarming symptoms will appear, and the most fatal consequences follow. But we have the testimony of some of the ablest medical writers, that the free and habitual use of ardent spirits is directly calculated to destroy this order, lay the foundation of numerous and painful diseases, and ultimate in a premature death. "Drunkenness," says Mr. Beman, "is itself a disease; a disease which is performing the work of death with a more desolating vengeance than the yellow fever or the plague. In almost every case it proves fatal. Look at the drunkard. It is often difficult to say whether, in taking the census, you ought to number him with the living or the dead. He is already a naked skeleton, or a bloated corpse; a walking mummy—when he can walk; a mass of animated putrefaction. He is dead while he lives. Intemperance, even if it were not the parent of other diseases, is itself the bluest plague that ever visited and cursed the world.

"But this evil comes not single-handed. Ask the physician, and he will tell you that it originates many of the most afflictive diseases which are cutting down our dying race. By strongly exciting the stomach, it soon destroys its tone, brings on loss of appetite, induces dyspepsia, and lays the foundation for distressing and fatal complaints of the bowels. It produces inflammation of the liver; and this often terminates in obstruction, enlargement, suppuration, and even schirrus of that important organ. Jaundice and dropsy follow on in the fatal train. By increasing arterial action, it preys upon the delicate structure of the lungs, paints the hectic flush upon the cheek, and heaves the hoarse and deep-seated cough that prophesies of the sepulchre. To this cause must be referred a large proportion of the cases of rheumatism, and a still larger proportion of the gout. It acts most powerfully upon the brain, producing inflammation of that organ, and

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its surrounding membranes, and inducing epilepsy, palsy, apoplexy, and madness. But the most distressing of all diseases is the brain fever of the drunkard. If there is any instance in which man, at the present day, is delivered over, soul and body, to the buffeting of foul spirits, the drunkard's mania furnishes that example. The person who is afflicted with this disease feels himself in hell while on earth."

Intemperance inflames the appetite.

To give the history of the commencement of intemperance, in every case, would be impossible; for, by the inventive genius of wicked men, the use of ardent spirits has been introduced into almost all companies, and made the bond of union in almost all friendships. No work of magnitude can be begun, continued, or consummated, without the use of this deadly poison. If a man is about to rear for himself a dwelling, it would be considered extremely improper, and, indeed, almost unpardonable, not to furnish the company with rum enough, that every one might get intoxicated if he wished. And even the precious fruits of the earth cannot be gathered in, during the joyous season of *harvest home*, without the fumes of this unhallowed mixture. Its unhallowed voice hails the birth of your children, and is found among the obsequies of your funeral solemnities. These ensigns of death (decanters of liquor) occupy a place on almost every counter, and are seen at almost every corner, beckoning to the unwary traveller to come in and be poisoned to death.

What wonder, then, that the habit should be formed, while the occasions are so numerous, and the incentives so strong, to commence the practice of drinking? A person seldom, if ever, passes suddenly from a state of strict sobriety to a state of confirmed intoxication. Various are the methods by which the grand adversary succeeds in inducing persons to commence this destructive practice. The taste of liquor is agreeable, especially to children; hence, parents are induced to give them a *little taste*, and thus the use commences, and the appetite is formed. But when the habit is once begun, though, perhaps, with the firmest resolution not to increase or confirm it, it imperceptibly creates thirst; and thirst, too, which will not be satisfied but with more of the same deadly poison; which, alas, as often fails to produce the desired effect. Thus the temperate drinker is led on, step by step, increasing both the quantity of drink and the frequency of drinking, until he becomes a confirmed sot; and all the horrors of a drunkard's life and character settle around him and his family, in the gloomiest prospect of approaching destruction.

No person, it is believed, suffers so exquisitely from thirst as the drunkard. His appetite for strong drink becomes so keen, that he will part with the very last cent he has on earth, to gratify his hellish thirst. He will pawn the very clothes on his back, strip his own house (if he have one) of its furniture, his own wife of her raiment,

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and, what is still more dreadful than all the rest, he will snatch from the very mouths of his own offspring the last morsel of bread, that he may pour it down his own throat in liquid fire. God have mercy upon the drunkard! Again—

Intemperance inflames the passions.

The principal passions affected by intemperance are *lust* and *anger*. The former we leave for the consideration of every individual; only remarking by the way, that perhaps not less than ninety-nine out of a hundred of lewd persons of both sexes, are intemperate drinkers of ardent spirits. This is a most powerful exciting cause of those vile passions of the human heart, which disgrace man, and sink him beneath the dignity of a human being. Hence, wherever you see a house of ill fame, you will generally see a retailer of ardent spirits hard by; not unfrequently under the same roof. And while I am *so near*, why may I not add, wherever you see a theatre or playhouse, there you will see grog-shops in great splendor. From the ancient worshippers of the god Bacchus, to those of your own times, wine and lewdness have ever been closely associated together.

But intemperance most seriously affects the angry dispositions of the fallen heart. It so effectually blunts the perceptive powers of the mind, as, on the one hand, to inspire a false confidence, and on the other, to render the drunkard so extremely irritable, that the least supposed injury is by him magnified into a designed insult; he falls into a flood of passion while his angry soul, like the troubled ocean, "casts up mire and dirt." He is perfectly unfit to be reasoned with. Indeed, while intoxicated, he cannot be numbered among rational beings. The voice of conscience being so effectually lulled to sleep by this deadly opiate, and every true sensibility of honor destroyed, the intemperate man becomes a desperado. He is prepared for war upon either God or man. Few crimes exist but what had their origin in the use of ardent spirits. "In riots," says the author above quoted, "and in cases of assault and battery, you are sure to find the drunkard. As conscience continues to go down, he can carry the incendiary's torch, and light up the midnight conflagration; he can whet the assassin's dagger, and plant it in the unsuspecting bosom. Go to your penitentiaries and state prisons, and you will find that most of their tenants were men of intemperate habits, till they were arrested for crime, and reformed by the strong arm of the law.

From the Second Annual Report of the Prison Discipline Society, it appears that, from 1806 to 1826, there were condemned to the several penitentiaries in the United States, 20,000 criminals. "It is admitted on all hands," says the Report of the American Temperance Society, "that these, with perhaps scarcely one exception, are not only intemperate persons, but also that they were

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hurried to the perpetration of crime, when in a state of intoxication. Judge Rush, in a charge delivered to a Grand Jury, several years ago, has this striking remark :

"I declare, in this public manner, and with the most solemn regard to truth, that I do not recollect an instance, since my being concerned in the administration of justice, of a single person put on his trial for manslaughter, which did not originate in drunkenness; and but few instances of trials for murder, where the crime did not spring from the same unhappy cause."

Thus much for the inflammatory effects of intemperance.

3. *Intemperance is deceptive in its nature and influence.* "Whosoever is *deceived* thereby is not wise."

In the first member of our text, intemperance assumed the character of one of the rude sons of folly, pouring contempt upon human nature; but in this, it assumes the character of a deceiver of mankind. Various are the pretences urged by the intemperate for the use of ardent spirits. It is pretended that distilled liquor possesses great medicinal properties; so wonderful is its nature, that it can act in directly opposite ways! In the warm season of the year, it is *so cooling;* and in winter, it is *so warming!* This, however, is all a deception. It has been fully tested, by many fatal experiments, that a man will perish with the cold much sooner when in a state of intoxication than otherwise. And those who use it for its cooling qualities are equally deceived; for it only adds fire to their already excited systems. It is true that, for the time being, it raises the tone of animal feeling somewhat above its usual standard; but when it has spent itself, the reaction brought on thereby sinks the spirits far below their usual standard. This again produces that state of faintness and restless anxiety, which leads the individual again to have recourse to his cup. Nature, however, during this conflict, having sustained a loss of strength, a greater quantity of stimulus becomes necessary to produce the same degree of animation. The result is, that the man who, one year ago, drank but a very small quantity at a time, now drinks twice or three times as much. Thus the deception goes on unperceived by himself, and perhaps in direct opposition to his oft-repeated resolutions, until his folly is consummated in his becoming a confirmed sot.

Another deceptious pretext urged for the use of intoxicating liquor is that it drowns sorrow. Strange infatuation! What! throw yourself into the deep, to still the tempest? What! plunge into a sea of sorrow, to drown a drop of sorrow? There is no one instance in which the deceptive nature of this vice more clearly discovers itself than it does in this false notion. It only adds a deeper shade to the cloud of misfortune which is settling around his dejected head, and serves to plant an additional thorn in the pillow of

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his distress. How deceptive that influence, which, because a man has failed in business, inclines him to deprive himself of reason by intoxication, at a time when, of all others, he most needs the right use of reason! How deceptive that influence, which, because a man has severe domestic troubles, inclines him to have recourse to his bottle for relief, when, of all other times, he most needs the calm and deliberate use of all his mental faculties! How deceptive that influence, which, because a man has lost the rank of his parentage, leads him to seek one among the meanest brutes of the mire!

These are not the mere creatures of fancy. The history of ten thousand drunkards proves them to be facts. This practice, however, is near akin to one which, though not more sure of fatal success, is yet more precipitate and far more dreadful. I refer to the horrid practice of suicide; than which nothing can be more barbarous or unnatural; for a man, because he has the sorrow of the world, to blow out his brains, and rush, uncalled for, into the abyss of endless sorrow!

I shall add but one consideration more; to exhibit the fatal deception of the vice of intemperance; and that I shall take from calculations already before the public; but none the less true or important on this account.

Drinkers of ardent spirits labor under a most fatal deception, in relation to the vast sums annually expended upon this vile practice. Let them listen then to the following calculations; and may God arouse them from their fatal slumbers.

"The average quantity of distilled spirits, annually consumed in this country from 1801 to 1812, amounted to 31,725,417 gallons; that is, about four and a half gallons to each person. Estimating the present population of the United States at twelve millions, and taking the habits of the people in 1810 as the basis of calculation—and the quantity of ardent spirits annually consumed in this country, would amount to fifty-six millions of gallons. But other documents inform us, that the consumption of distilled spirits has made rapid advances during the last ten years; and it may now be stated, without the shadow of exaggeration, that sixty millions of gallons of this *liquid ruin*, are consumed every year by the inhabitants of this country; that is, five gallons to each individual; including in the enumeration every man, woman, and child, in the United States. If we estimate this liquor at only fifty cents a gallon (and a great proportion of it far more than doubles this expense before it reaches its open sepulchre, the throat of the hard drinker), we have the enormous sum of thirty millions of dollars. Look at this fact—thirty millions of dollars for this one article—an annual loss to the nation.

"Take another fact. In the United States there are 200,000

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paupers, supported at the annual expense of ten millions of dollars. The reports of hospitals, penitentiaries, and alms-houses, justify the statement, that three fourths, or 150,000 of these miserable beings, were reduced to pauperism by the single vice of intemperance, and these *self-made* beggars are supported by the nation at the annual expense of 7,500,000 dollars. In sixty years—the ordinary life-time of a man of temperate habits and of a sound constitution; in sixty years, 450 millions of dollars would be expended in these States, for the support of drunken beggars! And this tax must be paid by the temperate.

"Another item must be considered in estimating the annual expense of intemperate drinking—I mean the time lost to the nation by premature disease and death. *Thirty thousand* are every year sent to an untimely grave in this country, by the excessive use of ardent spirits. There is, probably, on an average, a loss of not less than ten years in these 30,000 drunkards, which they might have lived, if they had been men of sober habits. Here, then, is an annual destruction of 300,000 years of human life and labor. Now say, that each individual, on an average, might earn a hundred dollars annually, besides his own support; and this he might do, if he were a temperate and industrious man; and you have the sum of *thirty* millions of dollars lost to the nation on this score. Again, there is a vast sacrifice of time by the living drunkard. He must have time to take his glass; time to post off to the dram-shop; time to talk, and laugh, and swear with his tippling companions; time for his periodical carousals; time to stagger through the streets; and time to doze away a thorough drunken frolic. Suppose that one half of the ardent spirits consumed in the United States is used by men of intemperate habits, and that each pint, on an average, causes the loss of four hours time, and that each hour is worth 6¼ cents; and who cannot earn this sum in an hour? Here, then, we have sixty millions of dollars annually sacrificed, in this country, in the living drunkards' time.

"Now put these items together, and behold the appalling amount. Cost of spirits annually consumed in the United States, 30 millions of dollars; for the support of paupers, 7,500,000 dollars; value of time lost by premature death, 30 millions; loss of time by living drunkards, 60 millions; making the grand total of 127,500,000 dollars. And in this computation, I have said nothing of sheriffs' fees and costs of court; nothing of the time taken by wives to wait on drunken husbands; and nothing of surgeons' and physicians' bills. If these were added, the annual tax imposed on the United States, by the existence and operation of ardent spirits, in all their diversified relations, might be fairly set down at the round sum of 130 millions of dollars.

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"Now let any considerate man look at this, and he will be prepared to lift his voice, and heart, and hand, against the very existence of this tremendous evil."*

From the subject before us we may infer—

1. *That every intemperate man is a fool.* This is more than intimated in the sequel of the text. "Whosoever is deceived thereby *is not wise.*"

Whenever, therefore, you see a drunkard, you see a fool; and whenever you see a man who is a temperate drinker of ardent spirits, who must have his *bitters* every morning and his brandy at every dinner, you then see a man, who, though he may have been as wise as Solomon himself, is in the highway to consummate folly. You may judge, without scarcely a probability of mistake, of what his character and end will be, by the practice he now follows. Mark that young man who, whenever he meets a friend, must have something to drink; who drinks on all public occasions, and who is in the habit of giving and receiving *treats*—mark him, I say, and see what he will be in ten years—perhaps in half that time—the grief of his friends, the sport of the vain, and the miserable outcast from human society. But all this, bad as it may seem, is but the beginning of sorrows to the drunkard. God has uttered his voice in relation to this vice. And what is the purport of that voice? "Wo to the drunkard!"—"Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The curse of God has gone out against the drunkard; it pursues him undeviatingly through every lane of life; and when he shall have dragged out the poor remains of his miserable existence, he shall die a fool, and go down to the interminable flames of hell, with the accumulated curses of an angry God upon his head. And if you would estimate the extent of that blasting curse, which yet awaits him in the annals of a boundless eternity, go and stand on the shore of that "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," and hear the groans, and behold the convulsive agonies, of the damned, and add eternity to this weight of wo, and you have some faint idea of the indignation of the Almighty against drunkards.

2. *We learn the duty of all the temperate, and especially of all Christians, in relation to this subject.*

If ever there was a call for the friends of God, of humanity, and of their country, to bestir themselves, and come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, it is in the cause of temperance. An evil has gone forth in this happy land, which threatens to bury, in one common grave, the virtues and liberties of the nation—an evil more distressing than the blasting or mildew; more destructive in its final consequences than the sword or the famine. This is the

* Beman on Temperance.

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vice which severs the tenderest ties of domestic and social happiness; that blasts the prospects of aged parents, and brings down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Every parent, then, who has a growing family around him, has a deep interest in the cause of temperance, whether he feels it or not.

What, then, is our duty in relation to this subject? Let us be deeply impressed with the nature and extent of this dreadful calamity. But let us go farther than merely to reflect and feel upon this subject; not only to deplore, but to help remove the evil. Let every temperate drinker of ardent spirits dash the cup from his mouth, and adopt, from this hour, the plan of total abstinence, except it be prescribed as a medicine, by a *temperate* physician. Let all heads of families banish the use of ardent spirits from their habitations, and no longer consider it a token of hospitality and friendship to set intoxicating liquors before their friends. Let parents often explain to their children the dreadful consequences of intemperance, and solemnly warn them against this destructive evil. "But Christians must go one step farther. I am convinced that deep and thorough reformation can never take place, while Christians, for the paltry consideration of a little money, furnish others with the means of destroying both body and soul for ever. It is easy to make the stale plea, that men who love to drink will have their dram, whether Christians sell it to them or not. The same might be said of dealing out poison, in any shape, for the destruction of human life. There are other questions, far more important, to be settled. Is it right? is it for the glory of God? is it for the good of the church? is it for the salvation of souls? These questions ought to be answered upon the conscience of every Christian, and upon the Book of God."* But there must be perseverance in this work, as well as a fair outset. Many have begun right and run well for a season, but alas! they have grown weary in well doing. In relation to this subject, the conduct of a Christian Indian, of the Missasugah tribe, forms a fair example for every Christian. He was on a long journey through the wilderness in Upper Canada. Being weary and hungry, he called at the wigwam of an old friend, and desired some refreshment. It was readily set before him, together with a bottle of whiskey, of which he was desired to drink. But no, said he, I am a Christian, and Christians do not drink *fire water* (for so the Christian Indians call ardent spirits). But, said his host, are we not friends? Yes, replied the Christian savage; but I am a Christian! Well, replied the other, if you will not drink with me, neither shall you eat with me. It was enough. Our Christian hero rose, bid his friend farewell, and pursued his journey, weary and hungry as he

* Beman.

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was. When you reflect that this man had been a drunkard all his days until his conversion to God, what an example does it set before us! Every possible advantage was taken of his relation as a friend, of his condition as a hungry man, and of his situation as a weary traveller, and yet he was firm to his integrity. O amiable example! Let every professor of the name of Christ, who is in the habit of drinking ardent spirits, hear this, and cover his face with shame. The very stones cry out—and God is, of these sons of the forest, raising up children unto Abraham.

"Every church," says Mr. Beman, "ought to be a temperance society." This, we rejoice to say, has ever been the fact in relation to our own church. Nor does it invalidate this remark, to say, that some Methodists have shamefully broken their vows, and become intemperate; for the same might probably be said of some of the members of any other temperance society. Although, therefore, it is not necessary for us to join a temperance society in order to belong to one, yet, for the sake of example, and to assist our brethren of other denominations in their very laudable efforts in the cause of temperance, I would say, on one condition, join temperance societies.

That condition is, that the society does not contemplate the raising of an immense fund, by contributions from the various denominations, to be exclusively devoted to the support of agents selected from any one particular denomination. Every one must see, that the objection contemplated in this condition, would only tend to divide the Christian efforts of the various denominations, and thwart the best designs of all parties. Keeping this condition then in view, I would most heartily advise every member of the Methodist Episcopal church, to join temperance societies, wherever they are formed, and help, by a simultaneous effort, to put down the monster of intemperance.

There is no necessity, if the temperance reformation *alone* is our object, of an immense fund, and of a great parade about this business. Let every minister of Christ form articles of voluntary association, within the bounds of his own congregation, and induce as many, both of professors and non-professors, as he can to subscribe to them. Let them preach frequently and pointedly against the use of distilled liquors, in any shape whatever, except as a medicine. Let them lift their warning voices in public and in private—"cry aloud and spare not," until the whole community is brought to feel and act as they should on this important subject.

Let magistrates, who do not bear the sword of civil authority in vain, unite their efforts, and shut up every dram-shop which is found open upon the sabbath day; which both their oath and the word of

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God require. But, above all, let Christians not forget, that their great strength lieth in having access to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God only can give the desired increase.

And he hath said, "I will be sought unto by the house of Israel, to do these things." Let Christians then in private, and in the social circle, remember the cause of temperance. And when assembled in public, on special occasions, to pray for the success of the gospel in general, or for any one Christian enterprise in particular, let them not forget to pray, that God will graciously grant his blessing upon the combined efforts of all Christians, to put away the evil of intemperance from the land; and thus to be the honored instruments, in the hands of God, of saving thousands of souls from death, and of hiding a multitude of sins.

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EXTRACT

FROM AN

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE MALDEN TEMPERANCE SOCIETY, JAN. 1830.

BY MR. WILLIAM C. BROWN,

BOSTON, MASS.

It is a truth which cannot be withstood, that, three years ago, the alarming vice, intemperance, threatened the ruin of this country. There were a few individuals who saw the terrible catastrophe hastening. They saw that if this dreadful scourge—this pestilence that walketh in darkness, and destruction that wasteth at noon-day, should increase for fifty years to come with the rapidity it had for the last thirty years,—"The glory has departed!" would be written on the posts of our doors. They saw that the enemies of free and popular governments, who have always watched us with a jealous and envious eye, and who have repeatedly predicted our downfall, would then exultingly exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen!" Alas! alas! thou great nation, thou mighty people! "the fruits thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all."

At this fearful juncture, they commenced the work of reform with a holy ardor. As they proceeded they gathered fresh strength and courage; and thus far their labors have been blessed beyond their most sanguine expectations.

The expression that this is an alarming and destructive vice, is as true as it is common; but the fact is not yet felt, as it should be, in its full force. By its prevalence our sensibilities have become blunted, and our sympathies chilled. We have regarded it as a kind of necessary evil, and therefore have made but few efforts to arrest its progress. Two years ago, it was ascertained that there were then in the United States 50,000 distilleries; and that 1,200,000 barrels

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of ardent spirits were consumed in the United States every year! How is it possible, with such an enormous consumption of this *fire-water*, that we should have less drunkenness? As a still further proof of its prevalence, it may be added, that, to this detestable and loathsome vice, we pay, in the different items of original cost of the article, waste of time, expense of civil and criminal suits, and pauperism occasioned thereby, an annual tribute of 120,000,000 of dollars! Independent, intelligent, as we boast ourselves to be, how is it that we so tamely submit to this degrading and ignominious slavery? Unlike the bondage of the ancient Hebrews, ours is a voluntary slavery. Our Pharaoh is intemperance, and its concomitant vices are our task-masters.

We are shocked with the accounts which we receive of the burning of widows with the dead bodies of their husbands in Bengal. It is said that 600 per year are the victims of this cruel superstition. But our Bacchanalian God, our insatiate Moloch, is not satisfied with less than 30,000 victims per year; making 80 human beings per day!

Among these are numbered the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the noble and the mean. It lays in the dust the amiableness of the wife and mother. It feasts on the beauty of youth, and banquets even on the wisdom and strength of age. You may see it in the grog-shop and brothel, clad in rags, bullying, swaggering, and taking the name of God in vain. On the farm you may discover it by the prostrated fences, the cattle unruly and roaming at large, and the buildings in decay. You may see it in the splendid mansion, and in the humble cottage; in the study of men of science, and in the haunts of the gambler. Like the frogs of Egypt, it has come up into our bed-chambers and kneading-troughs.

And upon whom will this iron-handed giant fix next his unrelenting grasp? Will it not be upon the temperate drinker? Beware, then, I beseech you, by all the mercies of God, by your duty to your family and country, and by all the blessed hopes of heaven, beware how you sport about the brink of such a fearful destruction.

In the town of Vansville, Maryland, a man, after having drunk up all his substance, became at last worthless and abandoned. He left his children entirely to their mother to feed, or to let them starve. She had four, and was often made to feel that pang which only a mother knows, when she hears her children's cries for bread which she has not to bestow.

She arose one day, as soon as it was light, to work for her children, whom she left asleep on the floor, where they had lain around her, crowded together for mutual warmth, and but half covered with shreds of old blankets and rags, the only remains of her husband's drunkenness. While at work carding, one of the children awoke

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went to his mother, and piteously cried for a piece of bread. The cries of the first disturbed the second, and presently all four were around her, with pale countenances and watery eyes, begging for a little food, of which she had not a morsel for them or herself.

This scene continued for several hours, until, at twelve o'clock, one of the neighbors for whom she had been spinning, sent her half a bushel of corn. It is not easy to conceive the transports of the poor mother and her children at the sight of the grain. She gave it to her husband to carry to the mill at a short distance, and waited with anxiety for his return.

Grown keener now at the thought of their bread, the children became more restless than ever; and the torturing cries of Bread! bread! began again to tear the mother's heart. But presently a dreadful suspicion, at her husband's delay, all at once racked her brain. She hastened to ascertain the cause, and when she came within sight of a grog-shop near the mill, she beheld him reeling and swaggering before the door. The hard-hearted wretch had sold the corn for that poisonous fluid called whiskey.

I know of no vice which will make a man so superlatively selfish, and render him so completely a child of hell, as drunkenness.

Another case. A widow woman of the same state, brought three little children, by drinking, to nakedness and starvation. One day, about twelve o'clock, she left her children, who had been crying all the morning for bread, to go to a neighbor's for some meal and some whiskey. Having staid a long time, and got somewhat intoxicated, she went reeling home with her meal. Upon her entrance she found the apartment empty. She called aloud for her children, but heard only the echo of her sad voice. She searched for them, but searched in vain. The evening was very cold, and during the night there was a fall of snow. Their infant heads had no covering, and their trembling bodies but one scanty article of clothing. Having crossed a stream, they took a wrong course, and lost themselves in the woods. The eldest was six, and the youngest but three years old. The next day they were found locked in each other's cold embraces, with marble cheeks and lips closely pressed together. And as they could not be separated, they were thus buried in one grave; and the mother, in her fits of distraction, talks about being the murderer of her own children.

Almighty God! "if it be thy will that man should suffer, impose upon me whatever seemeth good in thy sight;—give me nothing but the bread of sorrow to eat—take from me the friends in whom I had placed my confidence—place me in the cold hut of poverty—lay me on the thorny bed of disease—let my enemies persecute and defame me—let me sow in the whirlwind and reap in the storm—let those that are younger than I have me in derision—let my welfare pass

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away as a cloud, and my enemies come upon me as the wide breaking-in of waters—when I look for good let evil come, and when I wait for light send darkness; set death before me in all its terrors,—do all this—but save me, merciful God! O save me from the overwhelming fate of the drunkard!"

If any thing exists in connection with our American Zion, which is offensive to him who bought us with his blood, and which gives the infidel and even the heathen occasion to triumph over us, is it not this affecting evil? Has not the moment arrived, when all the talent and influence of the church should be united to annihilate intemperance?

What an honor is it considered to have been instrumental in the achievement of our national independence. And here is an opportunity to display your patriotism, your Christian philanthropy and self-devotion in a glorious cause; a cause which will reflect honor upon any man. A cruel, oppressive tyrant has invaded our shores. He has brought with him moral, natural, and eternal death; having no pity for old or young; and will, if suffered to go on, make slaves of us all. Shall we sit still and see his wide and general devastation without an effort? Shall we securely fold our arms, when consequences so dreadful will be the result of our inactivity? Shall we be silent and sluggish spectators of this havoc? Shall the voice of weeping and wailing pierce the very heavens, and our hearts remain unmoved? Shall the loud lamentations and prayers of distracted wives and starving children reach the skies, and we remain insensible? Men and brethren! let us awaken out of our sleep! It is no time now for cold calculation. The enemy is upon us! If he conquer, we have nothing to expect at his hands but tortures and death. His tender mercies are cruelty.

At first he came to us in the garb of friendship. He told us of his skill to heal our maladies. He promised to give us health for sickness—joy for sorrow—pleasure for pain, and plenty for poverty. We took him by the hand and bade him welcome. We received him into our confidence. We embraced him as our brother and companion.

But while he has been a partaker of our hospitality, he has basely insulted and abused us. He has scattered fire-brands and death among us. He has sowed dissension in our families and neighborhoods. He has brought with him pestilence, sword, and famine. He has murdered our children before our eyes. He has carried away captive our wives and daughters. He has brought down the gray hairs of many a father with sorrow to the grave. He has wrested from the hard hand of poverty the scanty pittance that should have furnished bread for the hungry.

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It is against this blood-thirsty tyrant we have waged war. Against this monster we have lifted up the banner. We have girded on the sword in a *holy* cause, and with a solemn determination that we will never sheath it, until its thirsty blade has drunk his very blood.

Opposition we may expect, but let no opposition hinder us—let no slander offend us—let no ridicule divert us—let no resistance deter us—let no scorn move us—let no threats daunt us—let no reproach, contumely, disgrace, misrepresentation, or obloquy, discourage us. Let Onward! Onward! be our watchword, and we *shall* succeed.

From the Gulf of Mexico to the St. Lawrence, from the Atlantic to the Valley of the Mississippi, the alarm has been sounded! Let us go up to battle! Let us equip ourselves for the combat! And the Lord God of hosts shall lead us on to triumphant victory!

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SERMON XII.

BY REV. LA ROY SUNDERLAND.
WEYMOUTH, MASS.

THIS LIFE A TIME OF PROBATION.

GENESIS, VI. 3.

AND THE LORD SAID, MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE WITH MAN.

THERE are two things, which seem to render these words particularly worthy of our serious attention.

The first is, they are said to have been spoken by the infinite God! When God speaks, man should listen!

The second consideration which should urge them upon our attention, is, they present us with a subject which most seriously concerns us, and in which we are, individually, interested. The words are, evidently, of universal application—"My Spirit shall not always strive with MAN." As though God had said,—I see man is increasing in wickedness, and presuming upon the very mercy which I designed should be the means of leading him to repentance; I will, therefore, shorten the time of his probation upon earth. It is necessary, that he should know what his real condition is in this world, as a sinner; the relation which he sustains to his Maker; how long his day of trial may last; and what the consequences must be, if he continue to reject the strivings of my Spirit. That he may know this, my Spirit shall continue to strive, to enlighten, to convince of sin, and his need of righteousness; and that he may not neglect the only time he can have to secure the salvation of his soul, I will now urge upon him the danger to which he is exposed;—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

The doctrine, then, contained in these words, may be proposed thus:

THAT THIS LIFE, WITH MAN, IS A TIME OF PROBATION, FOR ANOTHER AND AN ETERNAL STATE OF EXISTENCE.

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If I were to speak of a state of probation, and refer to individuals, and the affairs of this world, I apprehend it would not be difficult to understand my meaning. I should be understood as designating a case where a person had been admitted on trial, for a certain space of time, to test his fidelity to the master's cause; and directed to the performance of particular duties, with a promised reward if found faithful, and a specified punishment in case of disobedience.

This life, I have stated, with man, is a time of probation or trial. I mean by this, that it is a state of existence into which he is brought by his Creator; the design of which is, that he should here prepare himself, by a life of holiness, dictated by God's Spirit, and enjoined in the Scriptures, for the felicities of an endless heaven; and where he is threatened with banishment from the favor of God, eternally, in case he sin away his day of probation, and die in a state of impenitence and unfaithfulness.

That you may understand what I would teach by this doctrine, you are now requested to attend to the following considerations:

1. *A definite object is distinctly proposed, as the great end of man's existence, desires, and labors, in this life.*

The Scriptures inform us that our first and chief concern in this world should be to "seek the kingdom of God." So saith the Saviour, "Seek ye, *first*, the kingdom of God and his righteousness." How distinctly this object is brought to view in the following text, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Sometimes it is held out to us as "a mark," or "a prize;" and then as "a crown of life, that fadeth not away." And again we are commanded not to labor, exclusively, for "the meat that perisheth," but to "labor for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." We are exhorted to "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near," because there is a time coming when God will not be found, when "he that is unholy, shall be unholy still;" this must be when the day of probation is passed, when the blessed Spirit has ceased to *strive*.

Scripture might be quoted, from almost every chapter in the Bible, to this point; but the above shows us, at once, that man is responsible to God for the use of his time, and for all he does, for it is *all* to be done "to the glory of God." You must perceive, from these texts, what most concerns you, what should constantly engage your undivided attention; you are called "to glory and virtue," to seek for holiness and heaven; "to make your calling and election sure," to secure the salvation of your never dying soul. Read, read the Holy Bible, and see if it does not present you with some-

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thing in which you are most deeply concerned: yes, if there be any thing taught in this sacred volume, you are taught to seek for "honor" that "cometh from God, for glory, immortality, and eternal life." Have you attended to this subject? O, may the Holy Spirit, which "strives with man," help you to lay it to heart now!

2. *The particular means are specified, by which holiness and heaven may be obtained.*

Faith is necessary. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." No man ever came to God in any other way, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." "He that believeth shall be saved," and, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Repentance is an indispensable prerequisite to pardon and acceptance with God. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." For "God hath commanded all men every where to repent." Now these texts, I think, cannot be misunderstood; and it would seem, indeed, no easy matter to misinterpret them. The design of them must be, if there be any design in God's holy word, to teach us the way, and the only way, of life and salvation. Man is a sinner; if a sinner, he must be guilty; if guilty, he must repent, or never be forgiven—never saved.

Our obedience is also necessary. But let us see how the word of God will apply here. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good, always." It needs no labored argument to come at the meaning of this text; it is our duty to fear God, and this we are commanded to do, *for our good, always*. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And this God does require of every man, and this he "*shows*" them by the Scriptures of truth, and by the agency of his Spirit; for those, who, "having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience, also, bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another. Here we see how all men, in every age, and in every nation, or tribe, under heaven, may "fear God and work righteousness;" and of such, it is declared, "they shall be accepted of him."

But again, the Scriptures inform us, that holiness of heart and life is absolutely necessary before we can enjoy the favor of God, or gain admission into heaven. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." And we are exhorted to seek this qualification for heaven.

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3. *Man is possessed of all the power necessary to enable him to comply with the conditions of the gospel, and be saved.*

Suppose I were to offer an invalid a thousand dollars, on condition of his walking a thousand miles in twenty-four hours; and should threaten him with a most painful and excrutiating death, in case of his refusal. Would this be considered as the most fair and favorable opportunity for the sick man to put himself in possession of the money I had offered him? Would there appear any disproportion between the offence and the threatening? Or, could this be considered the best display I could make of my benevolence? Would there be any consistency in such an offer, and such a trial? When I say that man has all the power necessary to use the means of grace, and comply with the conditions of the gospel, I mean that the grace of God has put him in a state of trial, where he has afforded him all the moral and natural power, to do what God requires him to do, in order to be saved. A few texts to explain this doctrine here: directly we shall see whether there be any thing in the Bible to prove it.

"And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offering unto the Lord, ye shall offer it at your *own will*." Here we perceive men have the power of choice; and certainly this text of Holy Scripture does not very well agree with the talk of some, good people no doubt, who tell us they were "*made*," compelled against their will and desire, "to hear his voice and enter while there was room." It matters not how depraved men are said to be, or however wicked and depraved they may be, yet, if the gospel of Christ have met the condition of man as a sinner, if a manifestation of the Spirit be given to every man, to strive with him, to profit withal; if the saving grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching them what they should do; if Christ is the light that enlighteneth every man coming into the world; then men, we understand, are freed from any inability imposed upon them by sin, to the free exercise of the *will*, in the choice of salvation. And if man possess all the power necessary to choose "whom he will serve," to comply with the conditions of life, and be saved, this must imply, also, sufficient time and opportunity to do all that is absolutely necessary for him to do for his own individual salvation. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time, behold, *now* is the day of salvation." Now is the time when God has promised to accept all who comply with the monitions of his Spirit; it is now he offers to accept the atonement of Christ, as a satisfaction for the sins of all believing penitents who come to him. But God has no where promised, nor has man any right to expect that, after he has neglected *one* opportunity, another will be afforded him. God is under no obligations, by promise, goodness, or justice, to keep any sinner in existence, and tender to him pardon and salva-

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uon, after he has once given him "a space for repentance." Hence the Scriptures inform us, that he has "given up" some "to a reprobate mind," suffered "strong delusion" to bewilder them, because they did not like to retain the "knowledge of God," but had "pleasure in unrighteousness."

The day of probation must last as long as the Spirit of God continues to "strive with man;" but how long it may cease to convince of sin, and to operate upon the hearts of impenitent sinners, before the close of this life, in some instances, is not for us definitely to say; but that it does close its agency with such at the hour of death, my text, with many other scriptures, proves conclusively.

It will have been perceived, probably, from the view I have given above of the doctrine under consideration, that by far the greater part of mankind who are born into this world cannot be considered as placed in such a state of trial; and for this obvious reason, by far the greater part of mankind die in infancy, before they come to years of discretion. Infants and idiots are not moral agents, and, of course, cannot be amenable to any law. The future salvation of such is secured by the death of Christ, unconditionally, as might be shown by the tenor of the gospel, and many texts of Scripture.

It remains for me to observe,

4. *That the close of this life introduces men into a state of happiness or misery, where they are rewarded or punished, eternally, according to their works during their time of probation in this world.*

That man is placed here, by his Maker, in a state of trial for another world, is the belief of the greater part of Christendom, and not unlikely of the greater part of mankind upon the earth; but what kind of trial, or probation, it can be, different from what has been stated before, is not easy to determine; for, if you but take away either of the particulars by which this doctrine has here been explained, you at once destroy man's accountability, and impeach the character of God. There is no fair trial, without something proposed, and the way and means, distinctly pointed out, by which it may be obtained; nor then, unless it be naturally and morally possible for man to use the means, and comply with the conditions upon which the promise is made; nor is this all, the period for trial must be specified, and the time set for judgment, to determine whether the conditions have or have not been performed.

Here, then, you must perceive, that if this doctrine be true, it is one of immense importance; it is one in which you and I are interested, and in which every intelligent being upon God's earth is concerned; and yet it is one against which some of the most popular and pernicious errors of the day are directed. If God have, from all eternity, fixed, determined, and decreed the final salvation of a part or the whole of the human family, unconditionally, then the

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doctrine under consideration is not true, it does not concern you. But if it can be shown, in all propriety and reason, and Scripture, that this life with man is a time of trial, such as I have explained, then it is proved that no act of the Deity, in time nor in eternity, has made your salvation or damnation a matter of absolute certainty. It is proved that you are concerned in this subject, that your best good, your eternal felicity, is at stake here!

The arguments by which this doctrine is supported are many, and they are conclusive. They are not of my own making. They are drawn from the unerring word of God. The only favor I ask of you now is, that you will admit in your mind, for a few moments, the bare possibility that you may have been in error, and then forget not, while you follow me, that God hath said,—*My Spirit shall not always strive with man!*

Let us proceed to consider,

1. *The knowledge which the Scriptures give us of the original condition of man.*

That God placed man in a state of probation, when he was first created, in the garden of Eden, no one can doubt who believes the Bible. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!"—or, "*dying, thou shalt die.*" Here was a state of trial. We see what man was to do in order to enjoy the favor of his Maker, and the consequences laid before him, in case he proved unfaithful. What the promised reward was, or how long the trial might have lasted, we are not informed; it is enough, however, for us to know that man very soon sinned, became *spiritually dead*, and demerited the fulfilment of the whole penalty with which his transgression was threatened. God mercifully suspended him from suffering *temporal* and *eternal death*, upon the promise of a Saviour, and gave him another trial, which was to last, it appears, till he returned to "the dust" from which "he was taken." That the foregoing can be proved from the first three chapters of Genesis, is as evident as that God at first created man, or that man has since sinned against his Maker.

2. *The knowledge the Scriptures give us of God's dealing with mankind in all ages of the world.*

Whatever views some may entertain concerning the divine economy, it is, I believe, acknowledged by all, that, apparently, God has always dealt with mankind as with moral agents; as though they might have done otherwise from what they did do. We have seen how he dealt with Adam, but the conduct of God towards him must be considered altogether inexplicable the moment you deny the doctrine in question. But I may be told, "that God always has govern-

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ed men by law, and that when they have broken his law they were justly punishable." And by what kind of *law* does God govern men? Is it one which his decree has no influence in determining they shall break? If so, then the doctrine of my text is true, and the one which says, "God hath unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass," is not true. For what did God destroy the antediluvians? Was it for their not doing what they *might* and *ought* to have done? Admitting this is admitting the doctrine in question.

But suppose the antediluvians were not punished after they ceased to exist in the flesh; but were immediately received into the joys of heaven, or, reserved in a state of unconscious existence, to be made happy at the resurrection morn. Still the difficulty is the same. They were drowned, punished, destroyed,—not for doing what they might and ought to have left undone, but *for doing the will and good pleasure of God!* Yes, for doing just as God desired, willed, and determined from all eternity, they should do; "the fountains of the great deep were broken up," "the heavens were opened," and Jehovah poured torrents of destruction upon them, for forty days and forty nights together! To mention such ridiculous absurdities, is but to confute the error which leads to them.

But it may be said, "God destroyed their bodies, but saved their souls;" then, I answer, so much the worse. Was not the salvation of their souls the greatest possible good that God could confer upon them? How, in the name of reason, then, I ask, how did the Deity testify the "grief" which, it is said, he felt at their sin? How did he manifest his abhorrence at their great "wickedness?" How did he commend the "righteousness" of Noah, if the antediluvians ceased to suffer at the hour of death? To these important questions an objector ought to give a satisfactory answer.

We are informed how God dealt with the Egyptians. And that hardened, wicked tyrant, who inquired "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?"—after oppressing the people of God with the most cruel and unjust servitude, with all his idolatrous host was admitted into glory and felicity at the right hand of God, while Moses, and Aaron, and all the virtuous and faithful with them, were doomed to a forty years' journey, in a waste howling wilderness, to cry for water and for bread, to be tormented and bitten by fiery flying serpents, and many of them to linger out a miserable existence in a desert land! To admit this, with many, is more consistent than to suppose this life a state of probation, after which God may reward or punish men "according to their works."

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, "are set forth an *example*, suffering the vengeance of eterna. fire." But of what are these inhabitants the "example," if their sufferings actually ceased the moment they died? They are not an

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example of "suffering," nor of "vengeance," for in that case there is but one fair inference which can be drawn from the facts recorded in their history; and that is, the more abominably wicked a people are, the sooner they are admitted to glory and heaven!

Pursue God's dealings with the ancient Israelites, from the birth of Jacob down to the final destruction of their polity and nation by Vespasian. The history of the whole world cannot furnish us with a parallel to the miseries and calamities of this people. Famine, murder, rapine, pestilence, fire, and sword were but a part of the judgments with which they appear to have been scourged from the very beginning of their existence. Of these evils they were repeatedly forewarned, and cautioned against committing the sins which led to them. Who can read Christ's predictions concerning them, and not feel like mingling his tears with those of the weeping Son of God, over this devoted people. O, that thou hadst known, "even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes"—"*because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.*" Here is the very doctrine of my text! Were "these things hid from their eyes," when they had done the will of God, and had acted the very part for which they were created?

But again, the doctrine under consideration is argued,

3. *From what we know of the condition of mankind, while in this world.*

Here I might ask what men suffer for; or, for what are they punished in this life at all? The answer is at hand. If this be not a state of trial for another world, then "all the sufferings of this present life must be designed to reform the sufferer, and not to satisfy the claims of vindictive justice." Now let this be borne in mind, for this is admitted, and zealously taught, by all who deny the doctrine of future punishment.

Let us see, then, how this answer will apply to matter of fact. It is a matter of fact, and we do know that the greater proportion of mankind who are born into this world die in a state of infancy, before they become amenable to the law of God. Such have never personally committed actual sin, yet we know that they do suffer, and suffer, in many instances, an indescribable amount of misery. Admitting the information which the Scriptures give us concerning original sin, and it is easy to account for this. But deny that this life is a time of probation, and you say, tacitly, that these infants are punished to satisfy a principle in the Deity that you would condemn in the devil himself, or in the most abandoned wretch that crawls upon the earth. They are not punished to reform them, for they are not depraved, it is said, nor are they punished to satisfy the claims of divine justice, for they have never committed actual sin. I ask, then, for what are they punished? For what do they suffer?

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It is a matter of fact, that thousands of virtuous and pious people nave suffered in this life for crimes which they never committed. Instance the case of those put to the most painful and shocking deaths in this commonwealth, for supposed witchcraft. Instance the case of others, in this and many other countries, who have been condemned to suffer death in its most horrid forms, for crimes which, it has been proved, after they were dead, were committed by persons, so far as we know, who never were punished at all; now, if any fair inference can be drawn from matter of fact, then we must infer, from the above, that this life is a time of trial, as explained before, that this state of society is imperfect, and in which men are not and cannot be rewarded or punished "according to their works."

But I am disputed here. I am told that "all men are punished before they die; are cursed, damned, to the full extent of the law, and the demerit of their sin." I ask for evidence of this. Is there any thing takes place in this world, which we can either hear, see, feel, or know, to convince us of the truth of this assertion? There is something which we can *hear*, indeed, and this we might do often: it is the *ipse dixit* of those who teach this doctrine. We have required, we have begged, we have demanded more than this, again and again, but more than this they never gave us. The truth is, it does not appear, neither from Scripture, nor from matter of fact, nor from reason, that the most impenitent sinner has ever suffered more, either in remorse of conscience, or in the pangs of death, than some of the most virtuous and godly have suffered, in contrition for sin, and the infirmities common to humanity. But the word of God puts this matter beyond doubt: if this is to decide the question, then the point in dispute is settled. "For this cause, *God gave them up* unto vile affections. Wherefore, *God gave them up* to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts. And, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, *God gave them over* to a reprobate mind. *Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over* unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Having their *conscience seared* with a hot iron." Now, needs it argument to prove that those who are *past feeling* are past suffering? That those whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, cannot feel remorse or punishment from the agency of their consciences? If it does, then, indeed, it needs argument to prove that the sun shines at noon-day; it needs reasoning and argument to prove the truth of an express declaration of the infinite God!

Here, then, is an insurmountable, an unanswerable objection against the assertion so often reiterated, that men suffer, in this life, all the penalty of God's law; and depend upon it, there is no getting over this difficulty, with fairness or candor. If infidelity, lying, thieving, cursing and swearing, adultery, drunkenness, murder, and

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suicide; if such abominable crimes—if the word of God puts it beyond question that some are *past feeling*, past feeling remorse of conscience or grief for sin; then it is demonstrated, beyond the possibility of successful contradiction, that this life is a state of probation, and that, in another world, men must be rewarded or punished "according to their works."

Therefore, from what has been observed, it does appear, most evidently—1. That all the sufferings of this present life are not, in every case, designed to bring the sufferer to repentance, as in the case of infants. 2. That the punishment of sin cannot consist in the commission of it; because we know, that some virtuous persons are punished for sins, by earthly tribunals, which they never committed. 3. That some do not suffer, in this life, for the sins they have committed, inasmuch as the word of God declares, that they are *given up*, *given over*, and PAST FEELING; so that to suffer, in this state, is absolutely impossible.

Here I might stop; but as I have noticed but a small part of the evidence presented in the Scriptures of the truth of this doctrine, we may now consider,

4. *The knowledge which the Scriptures give us, of that system of grace and mercy by which men are said to be saved.*

Mankind are represented by the word of inspiration, as being naturally *dead in trespasses and sins*, *without God*, and *without hope* in the world; as *lost* and exposed to the curse and penalty of a broken law. But "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is one of many texts which might be quoted to show, that the saving benefits of Christ's atonement are applied to the salvation of men, who are moral agents, *conditionally*. If the salvation of men were a thing of absolute certainty, there would be no more need, nor propriety, in God's requiring the agency of man, or certain conditions to be performed by him, in order to be saved, than there would be in the Deity's requiring the consent of man, as necessary to his own unoriginated and absolute existence. The moment you admit the necessity of using means to effect the salvation of man, you tacitly admit the doctrine for which I am contending. But means are used. We have seen these means distinctly pointed out, through the inspiration of God, by which salvation must be obtained, if it be obtained at all.

The Holy Spirit strives with man. But how can this fact be rationally accounted for, if the salvation of man be unconditional? If there be no danger of a man's sinning away the only "space" given him "for repentance," why has Jehovah declared, from the time men first began to multiply upon the face of the earth, and with such emphasis—*My Spirit shall not always strive with man?*

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In one of the oldest books in the Bible, and probably the oldest book extant, in the whole world, it is said—"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." And that "God openeth their ear to discipline, and commandeth, that they turn from iniquity." Thus we may perceive how God has always taught men his fear, how he has convinced them of sin, of their need of righteousness, or the necessity of an atonement; how he has shown them the danger to which they were exposed, and the dreadful consequences of living and dying in a state of impenitence and rebellion against him.

Again, it may be observed, that certain *promises* make up a part of that system of grace by which men are said to be saved. To quote many of them here would take up more room than I have to spare, and, indeed, why should I? The promises are in every one's mouth, as though a promise, made by God, of certain favors to us, to be fulfilled upon the performance of specified conditions, on our part, were only another name for absolute and unconditional certainty. The gospel holds out salvation to those who *repent, and believe.* Here are conditions; here is the very doctrine of my text. And has it ever been shown by any man, or body of men, that any one promise of God, in all the Bible, *secures, absolutely, the positive salvation of men,* who have committed actual sin, but who *do not repent,* who *do not believe,* who *do not obey the gospel?* No! It never has been done, it never can be done. And in my humble opinion, until this is done, *nothing is done,* towards proving the unconditional salvation of all men.

There are particular *duties* enjoined upon men, to be performed by them, as indispensably necessary to their salvation; like the following: "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." But it may be objected here, "That sinners are not addressed in the above text, and that unrenewed men are no where commanded thus, in the Bible." Then, I answer, sinners are under no command to work out their own salvation; and if so, I would ask what law they break in neglecting it? If they are directed by the Scriptures to "work out their own salvation," it is because "God works in them," his Spirit *strives* with them, and thus they are enabled to do what God has commanded. But if unregenerated men are not commanded to pray, repent, or to do any thing as a condition of their justification, certainly they break no law in refusing to do so; they commit no sin before they are converted; for "sin is the transgression of the law." The objector, then, must admit, either that God does work in unregenerated men, by which they are abilitated to comply with the conditions of salvation and be saved; or, that they are not commanded "to work out their own salvation," and

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consequently commit no sin in refusing to do so, and of course are not exposed to the penalty of God's law.

But further, there are many, and awful *threatenings*, which occupy a conspicuous place in the plan of salvation. "He that believeth not, shall be damned." "He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness,"—shall never be forgiven. Now what kind of an idea can you form of a *promise*, or a *threatening*, made to such as never did, and never can do, any thing, more or less, than what they are propelled to do, by God's irresistible decree? If man be not a moral agent, if he be not placed here in a state of trial, unbiased by any irresistible influence, then I can see no more propriety, in addressing him with a promise, or denouncing against him a threatening, than I could in your commanding a stone, or threatening a block of wood. Nor can you see any more propriety in the one case than in the other. Men may talk, and write volumes, to rid their systems of manifest absurdities, and they may confuse the minds of people with a torrent of words; but, after all, they never can explain what infinite reason did not dictate.

But perhaps I may be told, that all I contend for, with regard to the threatening above, is admitted; but, that "no threatening denounced against transgressors in the Bible extends beyond this present life, in its fulfilment." And how is this proved? Is it proved by the radical meaning of the terms used to signify duration, in the threatenings themselves? So it is often affirmed. This, then, is admitted, for argument's sake; and I will make another assertion upon the truth of it, and they must both stand or fall together. There is no term nor word used in any promise, contained in the Scriptures, which signifies duration beyond this present life. And let me press this upon your attention, *the promises and the threatenings of the Bible must stand or fall together*. There are the same terms used to signify duration in the one that there are in the other; and so, if all the penalty threatened in God's law be suffered in this life, then all the salvation promised in the gospel is enjoyed in this life; and thus we see, this state of existence is not a time of probation for man; indeed, but it is rather a time of blessing and cursing, of salvation and damnation, till we drop into the grave; and further than this, nor Scripture nor reason saith not.

But again it is objected, "the Scriptures inform us, that the gift of God is eternal life," but it is no where said, that the wages of sin, or the penalty of the law, is "eternal death." To this I reply,—1. All men are represented, in the word of God, as being *dead, dead in trespasses and sins*, till they are *made alive, quickened* together with Christ. 2. If a kind of life be spoken of extending beyond this present state of existence, and greater in degree than that which

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makes dead sinners spiritually alive here, and unites them to the favor and fellowship of God, it must be mentioned in such terms as we so often find in the Scriptures, "eternal life." 3. Sinners, as we have observed before, are spiritually dead; "if one died for all, then were all dead;"—yet these very sinners are still threatened with another death, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Now the death threatened here cannot mean temporal death, because the righteous, as well as the wicked, must suffer this death; nor can it mean spiritual death only, for this all men have suffered before; it must, therefore, mean *eternal death*, for this plain reason—there is no other death which they can suffer.

But this doctrine is proved,

5. *From the knowledge the Scriptures have given us of the condition of some, who have already died, and left this state of probation.*

Some who have died are represented to us as existing in a state of felicity "with the Lord." Thus of Lazarus, he is said to have been escorted by angels to Abraham's bosom. Thus of Moses and Elias. Thus of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, now "in the kingdom of God." The souls of those who were "slain for the word of God" and the "testimony of Christ" have been seen in a conscious state of existence and felicity.

Again, the inspired writers mention others who have died, who are now suffering in a state of misery. Thus of the rich man, "for I am tormented in this flame." But, I suppose, it were scarcely of use to mention this instance of Scripture proof, unless I also answer the objections which are now brought against the explanation which I put upon it. It is said, "this was spoken in a parable, and it cannot represent what did actually take place." I answer, if this were but a parable, then, most certainly, it teaches us what might take place,—a man might die, and be tormented in hell; for it has not yet been made to appear that Christ ever spake one parable, or one word, to teach what never was, nor ever can be. "But if you take the account of the rich man, as designed to countenance and teach the doctrine of future misery for the wicked, how do you explain many things that are mentioned in it, such as his "lifting up his eyes in hell," &c. And I would wish to know how you would explain these expressions, if it be a parable? Have those ever done this, who deny that the doctrine of future misery is taught in this account? Never! They never have attempted this, and well they might not. One thing, therefore, is certain, and that is, this account does recognize the doctrine under consideration, and all the labored criticisms with which it has been tortured by those who deny it do not, cannot, show to the contrary.

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Thus of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah; though it is nearly four thousand years since they were consumed by "fire from the Lord out of heaven," yet they are said, by the word of inspiration, to be suffering now "the *vengeance of eternal fire.*"

6. *The Scriptures speak of the necessity and the certainty of a general judgment.*

"God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." If it be objected that all judgment referred to in these texts takes place here, during this life; then I answer, so far as this proves any thing, it proves that this life is a time of trial; that men sin here, that they do wrong here, and differently from what it is the will or decree of God they should do. Why else should men be judged? But these, and other Scriptures, do refer to a judgment which cannot take place during this life, because, in these texts, men are said to be judged "according to their works." But the work of no man, strictly speaking, can be said to be done till the close of time and the end of the world. Though a man may be dead, his example may live, his principles may survive him thousands of years. The example of Noah, of David, of Joseph, is not forgotten; nor is that of St. Paul, or of Calvin, or of Wesley. The work of Voltaire, of Hume, and of Paine is not done; nor can it be said what influence the examples and principles of the above characters will have upon men and society, till men cease to live.

But again, the judgment which is finally to be passed upon the deeds of all men must be after death, beyond the limits of time, because the word of God informs us, expressly, that the souls and bodies of those who have died are actually called from their different places of abode, and reunited, in order to be judged. See Rev. xx. 12, 13. "And the sea gave up the dead;" this must mean that the bodies of all who were lost or buried in the sea, were "given up;" and "θάνατος, death, delivered up the dead which were in it;" this must mean the grave: it is here personified, and is represented as giving up its dominion over the bodies of those who had fallen victims to its power. "And ἅδης, hell, delivered up the dead, or disembodied spirits which had been retained in it; and they were judged every man according to his works."

7. *The final disposition which the Scriptures inform us will be made of the righteous and the wicked after the general judgment proves, conclusively, that this life with man is a time of probation.*

"These shall go away into eternal *punishment*, but the righteous into *life* eternal." And, "whosoever was not found written in the

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book of life, was cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Christ himself has spoken particularly of the disposition of the righteous and the wicked, which shall be made after the resurrection and the general judgment. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." There never has been any period, in all the history of the whole world, to which the above words of Christ will apply, with even a shadow of propriety;—they must refer to the general resurrection and judgment of men at the last day; or they are without meaning to us.

I very well know that a few detached passages may be wrested to prove to the contrary; and, indeed, so they might be to prove any doctrine that has ever bewildered the minds of men. But let any man lay aside his preconceived opinions, let him lay open his heart to the force of evidence, let him take a fair view of the condition of men in this life, let him go through with a candid perusal of God's word, and he will perceive this important doctrine upon every page, and in every chapter and verse of that Holy Volume. Deny this doctrine, and you at once throw an impenetrable veil over all God has ever done for the world since the creation of man:—his dispensations, his judgments, his mercies, his law, his gospel, the promises, threatenings, warnings, cautions, &c. &c. *all*, ALL, are dark and inexplicable;—but admit that this life is a time of probation, during which we are to prepare for another state of existence, and a light, clearer than the sun at noon-day, breaks through the darkest cloud that envelopes the throne of God.

I think I may now say, I have laid before you some reasons by which this doctrine appears to be conclusively supported. Possibly you may find some inclinations in your heart which may lead you to deny it; and, indeed, this you may do much more easily than you will find yourself able to prove it untrue. To do this, you must not forget you will have to show how God can threaten when there is no danger,—how he can consistently promise, on certain conditions, when it is absolutely impossible for man to fulfil them,—how God can, in justice or mercy, punish men for leaving undone duties which they never had it in their power to perform, and also for doing what it is really his will they should do; and yet again, for doing exactly as he himself *compels* them to do. This is a serious subject; and before you open your mouth, or move your pen, to tell me, or others, that "God has, from all eternity, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass,"—that God has fixed and made the salvation

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of a *part* or the *whole* of the human family, absolutely certain, you ought, as an honest man, it is your *duty*, to show how it can comport with the attribute of God's justice for him to punish one man more than another;—or, how he can with consistency promise, command, threaten, or punish men at all;—or, that *there is no such thing as sin or misery in the world.**

It now remains for me to close, by enforcing a few reflections, suggested by this subject. And,

1. *How exceedingly valuable is every moment of this present life!* Here you have a work of the utmost importance to do, but none too much time to perform it in. No time for sinful mirth or idle speculation, while dread eternity hath claims so high. O, then, how deeply does it concern you to "seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near;" lest "he swear in his wrath you shall not enter into his rest."

2. *How ready and earnest should you be to comply with the monitions of the Holy Spirit!* Upon its agency you are dependent for every good desire, for a knowledge of sin and of your danger, and for strength to perform your duty. It is this Spirit that helpeth our infirmities,—that teacheth us how to pray, and what to pray for. This is the light which enlighteneth every man coming into the world,—the agency by which Deity convinces *all* men of the necessity of complying with the conditions of salvation, without which they can never be pardoned, nor justified, nor saved. Continue to resist the strivings of this Spirit, and your case is hopeless!

3. *How heinous and damnable must sin be, that is committed against the strivings of God's Spirit!* So much so that the blessed Jesus has informed us, there is *one* sin, against the Holy Ghost, which can never be forgiven!

But why should blasphemy against the first and second Persons in the adorable Trinity be declared pardonable, and that committed against the Holy Spirit be left without forgiveness;—unless it be because of the peculiar and indispensable office he performs, in effecting the conversion and salvation of men? Hence, we are sol-

* Perhaps I ought to assign some reason why I mention those together, here, who, generally, *appear* to be so very far apart. The reason is obvious. Both Calvinism and Universalism spring from the same root—the supposed "divine decrees." In this one thing the *Calvinists*, *Universalists*, and the *Mohamedans*, are agreed: namely, that "*God has, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.*" And I cannot, for the life of me, perceive what just cause there can be for disputation among different denominations who sincerely adopt this sentiment as an article of their creed. It is, certainly, a satisfaction to me to reflect—1. That if the above doctrine be true, I am right, of course, both in my faith and practice; for I am just as God decreed I should be!—But, 2. If the above doctrine be not true, then it is as certain I am correct in this article of my creed, for I do not believe it.

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emnly admonished, "*not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*" But you grieve the Spirit of God every moment you defer repentance—by every sinful thought you indulge,—by every idle word you speak,—and every time you neglect your duty. Thus you abuse the goodness of God,—thus you aggravate his justice,—thus you kindle his dreadful ire,—and thus you put your soul beyond the reach of his mercy, and secure your own eternal damnation! For the Lord thy God hath said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." O, think on this! God help you to consider it, before it cease to strive with *you!*

4. *How justly is that man punished, who ends his day of probation in grieving the Spirit of God!* Think for one moment on those terrible denunciations of God's awful displeasure against such, contained in his word. They shall *be* ACCURSED, *cast out into outer darkness*, they *shall be* DAMNED, *suffer the* VENGEANCE OF ETERNAL FIRE,—*shall be punished with everlasting* DESTRUCTION *from the presence of God and the glory of his power!* And yet what just views can we suppose mere words can give of the state of that soul with whom the Holy Spirit has ceased to strive,—now "given over"—the "day of visitation" now ended;—no more is his heart tendered by the strivings of the blessed Spirit;—he is to be awakened and admonished no more. The harvest with him is past, his summer ended. The sun that once lit up conviction in his heart, and gave him to see the danger to which he was exposed, is now set for ever. The blackness of darkness gathers around him. O, the night of anguish that now settles upon him. Now the tremendous realities of an endless eternity open before his astonished vision,—tortured with the gnawings of his own guilty conscience, he sinks beneath enormous wo,—to feel, in eternal despair, what Jehovah meant when he said—"MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE WITH MAN!"

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SERMON XIII.

BY REV. CHAUNCEY RICHARDSON,
HINGHAM, MASS.

SOUND DOCTRINE UNPOPULAR.

2 TIMOTHY, IV. 3.

THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE

TRUTH and error form two vast empires. The former is based upon the infinite perfections of the immutable Jehovah. The deep and broad foundations of the latter are laid in the natural darkness and depravity of the human mind. Although these empires are diverse the one from the other; though one is an empire of light, and the other of darkness; yet to sketch their boundaries; to draw the true line of demarkation between them; to define, correctly and authoritatively, what is truth, and what is error, is a task which the unaided human mind could never accomplish. The heathen philosophers and sages attempted this Herculean task; they speculated; they reasoned; they disputed; they philosophized; but, like Simonides when interrogated by Hiero—what God is? they might with propriety have said, Give us more time; for they beheld the difficulties on either hand rapidly augmenting. This interesting and important work defied the mightiest efforts of the intellectual giants of olden time—"they found no end, in wandering mazes lost."

Although human reason existed in a very high, if not in its highest state, in the philosophy of the ancients, yet it was unable absolutely to settle a single moral truth. Though confident of success, the failure of human reason was complete; and why? Because it attempted the work single-handed; a work much above its province. And this failure of human reason should be held up as a perpetual monument of its weakness, and as a beacon to admonish after generations. But the darkness, the twilight of former ages has passed away; the true light now shines. The Divine Shechinah hath shone

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forth from between the cherubim, sending out his light and truth; saying, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth: my doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew."

The Most High has now furnished a moral map of the two empires; authoritatively defined their boundaries, and commissioned ambassadors to guard the empire of truth against invasion from the aspiring and artful agents of the empire of error. Among those appointed by the King of kings to defend his holy dominions, probably none have been more bold, fearless, indefatigable and devoted than St. Paul. He was "set for the defence of the gospel." "He preached the gospel with much contention." He defended it against innovations, refinements and corruptions attempted by false teachers. He developed its deep and holy mysteries. "In labors he was more abundant." To the most severe sufferings and privations he was no stranger.

Of Cyrus the Great it has been said, that there was one circumstance wanting to complete his glory; and that was, to have his virtue tried by some sudden reverse of fortune; by struggling through severe difficulties. But this great Apostle wanted not even this finishing touch of a truly glorious and virtuous character. Like his divine master, he was made perfect through sufferings. He was deeply affected with a prophetic view of the great apostacy of Christians from pure Christianity, and the growing unpopularity of sound doctrine in the latter times. And though he had alluded to this deeply affecting subject in one of his epistles to the Thessalonians, and in his former letter to Timothy, yet he could not forbear alluding to it again in his second letter, and especially in his most solemn, pathetic, impressive, inimitably eloquent charge to Timothy, to discharge with the most rigid fidelity and untiring perseverance the high and holy functions of an evangelist, an ambassador of Christ, a steward of the sublime mysteries of God. He viewed every principle of sound doctrine as having an important bearing on the salvation of men and the glory of God; it was not in his nature, therefore, to witness, without intense solicitude, the reception which the world would give them; and when he foresaw, that those doctrines which had received the seal of divinity would be rejected, and perverted by those who would bear the Christian name, his solicitude was greatly increased.

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." This portion of the divine oracles presents to our notice,

I. An important theme—"sound doctrine."

II. An affecting prediction—"The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine."

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I. I AM FIRST TO CONTEMPLATE A MOST MOMENTOUS THEME—SOUND DOCTRINE.

I call it momentous, because it comprises not a volume merely—but an eternity of meaning, of interest, of privilege, and reward; and because its magnitude is so vast, presenting a scheme of salvation, the most grand and efficient that could be conceived. But what is meant by the term sound doctrine? It has been affirmed that the word doctrine has no meaning: but this random declaration came from one, who has yet to learn the very alphabet of sound theology, and on whose mind it might be said darkness beamed visible. As the term doctrine, in its common acceptation, means the principles of any sect or master; by sound doctrine must be signified the grand principles of pure Christianity; a system of doctrine without any defect. But where shall such a system of doctrine be found? This question is most interesting and important; because the world abounds with systems of religion. There is, however, but one system, amidst this vast world of systems of religion, without defect; this is found in the unerring Scriptures; the others are of human contrivance, and with their tight folds stiffen and cramp the sentiments of their votaries.

It will be my endeavor to bring to view in its general features that system of doctrine which I believe to be sound. In doing which, I hope to be the humble instrument of purifying some minds from preconceived errors, of dispersing the mists of prejudice, and of conducting them to the truth as it is in Christ. To develope fully the sublime principles, the pure morality of sound doctrine, its exquisite adaptation to the moral condition of the human race, its elevated prospects, and numerous evidences, would require "a language whose letters should be bright stars, so that every word might sparkle like the coronet upon the brow of night."

There are several important tests of sound doctrine, which, when taken together, form one infallible test of pure, of sound theology; and that system of doctrine which will endure the ordeal of these tests, and which, when weighed in the balance of eternal truth, and close, candid investigation, is not found wanting, must be pronounced sound, without defect.

1. *I call that system of doctrine sound, which is legitimately deduced from the Holy Scriptures, and receives their authority.*

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Under the guidance, then, of the pure light of revelation, I present the following summary of doctrines, as the cardinal principles of sound doctrine, in the statement of which, however, I make no claim to entire originality. As by two or three witnesses every word is established,

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so by two or three Scripture quotations shall every doctrine be established—as my limits will not admit of a greater number.

That there is but one uncreated, unoriginated, infinite and eternal Being; the Creator, Preserver and Governor of all things. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;" or, more literally, "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." "To us there is but one God. One God and Father of all, who is above all."

That there is in this one Jehovah a Trinity of persons, not separately subsisting, but essentially belonging to the Godhead; which persons are commonly termed Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The form of baptism instituted by Christ teaches this doctrine. "Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is also most clearly expressed in the apostolic benediction. "The grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

That the Sacred Scriptures, including the Old and New Testaments, contain a full revelation of the will of God in reference to man; are alone sufficient for every thing relative to the faith and practice of all men, and were given by inspiration of God. "Every word of God is pure." "The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness."

That God created man in righteousness and true holiness. "God made man in his own image." "God made man upright."

That man fell from the state in which he was created, became morally corrupt in his nature, and transmitted his moral defilement to all his posterity. "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." "By one man's offence death reigned."

That God has, in infinite love to man, brought him again into a salvable state; has redeemed him by Christ Jesus. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

That Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer, is really and properly God, having, by the inspired writers, assigned to him every attribute and perfection essential to the Deity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All

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things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

That he is also perfect man, in consequence of his incarnation; and in that man or manhood dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; so that his nature is twofold, divine and human, or God manifested in the flesh. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." "The Son of man." "The man Christ Jesus." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "God was manifest in the flesh."

That Jesus Christ died for the whole human race, equally for all, and for every man. "He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "He by the grace of God, should taste (or has tasted) death for every man."

That Christ, on the third day after his crucifixion and burial, rose from the dead; and, after showing himself many days to his disciples and others, ascended to heaven, where, as God manifest in the flesh, he is to be the Mediator of the human race, till the consummation of all things. "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "And was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

That there is no salvation but through Jesus Christ, "who, as our Passover, was sacrificed for us." "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

That no human being, since the fall, either has or can have merit or worthiness of or by himself; and therefore has nothing to claim from God but in the way of his mercy through Christ. "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." "Not by

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works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

That faith is the principal condition of salvation. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

That justification, or the pardon of all past sins, is an instantaneous act of God's infinite mercy, in behalf of a penitent soul trusting only in the merits of Christ. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Her sins, which are many, are all forgiven." "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

That regeneration, or holiness, is of infinite necessity. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

That it is the privilege of believers to have their souls purified from all sin in this life, and be filled with pure love both to God and man. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Hêrein is our love made perfect." "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment." "To love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

That unless believers live and walk in the spirit of obedience, they will fall from the grace of God, and forfeit all their Christian privileges and rights, in which state of backsliding they may persevere, and, if so, perish everlastingly. "Thou standest by faith: be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee." "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." "Ye are fallen from grace." "When I say unto the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, shall he die for it."

That the period of human life is a state of probation. "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Every man must give account of himself to God."

That the promises and threatenings of the word of God are conditional, as they regard man in reference to his being, here and hereafter. "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." "They that endure unto the end shall be saved"

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"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth."

That man is a free agent, and has the power continually to choose the life or death that is set before him. "I have set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." "Work out your own salvation."

That every human soul, being put into a salvable state, may be saved; but if lost, the fault must be his own. "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him; but he that taketh warning shall deliver his own soul." "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

That the human soul is immaterial and immortal, and can subsist independently of the body. "There is a spirit in man." "Then shall the dust return to the dust, as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust; that the souls of both shall be reunited to their respective bodies; and that both will be immortal. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

That there shall be a day of judgment, after which all shall be punished or rewarded, according to the deeds done in the body. "God hath appointed a *day*, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and every one give account of the deeds done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether they be good or evil." "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "Then shall the King say unto them on the right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; also, unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

That these states of rewards and punishments are endless. "These (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "But the righteous into life eternal."

Now, if the doctrines which have been enumerated are not most conclusively deducible from the passages of Scripture accompanying

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them,—then these passages have no meaning—then the *Holy Bible* is a sealed book—then the *key* of divine knowledge is lost—then we are thrown back into the portentous darkness of many by-gone centuries—then may we despair of ever arriving at a saving knowledge of the *truth*.

But these doctrines are most undeniably taught in the Scripture huotations which have been made, and in a host of others which might be made ;—indeed, they present an epitome of the Bible—they present revelation in miniature. They are the very truths which the unerring *oracles* of God impress upon the mind of every sincere, unbiased reader of their heavenly pages. Yea, they are written upon the pages of inspiration as with a sunbeam. They not only perfectly harmonize with every part of the sacred volume, but the admission of all and every one of them is essential to the harmony of the Scriptures. Deny any one of these doctrines, and you make a blank in the Bible. Among the tests of sound doctrine, I have placed that of revelation foremost, partly to save repeating the doctrines, but mainly because it is the most important, and implies the others, this being the fundamental, and the others collateral tests.

In testing this system of doctrine by the Scriptures, I have let them speak their own clear, unsophisticated, infallible language ; for in establishing sound doctrine, there is no necessity of employing vain sophistry—hidden things of dishonesty—cunning craftiness—a corrupting of the word of God—a handling of it deceitfully—and a wresting of it from its most plain and natural import. No; it demands of its advocates a renunciation of all these indications of a corrupt theology.

2. *The perfect harmony manifest between the several parts of this system, is presumptive evidence of its soundness.* Truth and error can never harmonize. "What communion hath light with darkness? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or, what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" It was a most serious defect in all the ancient systems of philosophy and heathen mythology, and an irresistible proof of their unsoundness, that there existed numerous and most glaring discrepancies between their several parts. But this defect is not applicable exclusively to ancient systems of philosophy and mythology, but it applies very appropriately to numerous modern systems of philosophy and religion. Many of these systems exhibit a most ridiculous discordance of sentiment; and to reconcile them with each other, or with sound reason, not to say revelation, would be a task at which the most inventive genius must cower; yea, it would be an absolute impossibility. But this system exhibits an admirable connection and perfect agreement throughout. It presents an unbroken golden chain of doctrine, developing the eternal perfec-

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tions of the Deity, revealing the duties, obligations, and privileges of time, and disclosing the sublime interests and fearful awards of eternity. Like the heavenly bodies, moving in their appropriate orbits, harmoniously answering the grand design of their glorious Creator and Upholder; the several celestial bodies composing this divine constellation harmoniously subserve the most elevated and important purposes. The doctrine of the supreme divinity of Christ, connected with his atonement, constitutes, in this system of sound doctrine, the sun to which all the other doctrines are subordinate, and their stations refer; which imparts to them their splendor, influence, and importance, and connects them in glorious harmony. Pluck from it this splendid luminary, this centre of attraction, and you may inscribe on it, "Ichabod," the glory is departed,—the delightful harmonies are broken,—ruinous confusion ensues,—the light of salvation goes out in obscurity—is exchanged for palpable, eternal midnight.

3. *I call that a system of sound theology, between which and the divine perfections there is a perfect agreement.* This system of doctrine clashes with no one perfection of the Deity, but presents the same entire view of his sublime character as is seen in the *Holy Bible*, the only authentic history of God. It proclaims him as the great First Cause of all things, as the moral Governor of the universe, to whose righteous laws all rational beings are amenable for their conduct. It displays the Divine Being as a Trinity in Unity, as God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. It proclaims him as the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. It represents him as the Almighty, who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but who will destroy without remedy those who, being often reproved, harden their necks. In short, it exhibits the great Jehovah as being infinitely pleased with holiness, but infinitely displeased with sin—as promising the reward of eternal life to those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality; but threatening to render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to such as are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness. This system, unlike many others, not only perfectly harmonizes with the divine perfections, but exhibits a most beautiful and delightful harmony among them. "Here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." While some systems exhibit to our view, as objects of worship, ideal deities, patterns of every species of impurity and unholy ambition; and while others annihilate a part of the divine perfections, or set them at variance with

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each other, this system of sound doctrine portrays a God of truth, who is without iniquity, just and right, challenging the love, the service, the admiration and worship, of all rational beings throughout his own vast dominions. Yea, there is none like this God in all the earth: none of the gods of the nations are to be compared with him whose glory is above the heavens; "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

4. *The admirable adaptation of this system of doctrine to the moral condition and circumstances of man, is irresistible evidence of its soundness.*

"A medicine for every wound,
All, all we want is here."

Is the human mind enveloped in moral darkness? Is man in a state of extreme ignorance? Is he unable by searching to find out God? Is unenlightened human reason nothing more than palpable ignorance? Is it deeply stained with, and powerfully influenced by, depravity? And is man by its aid unable to discover those truths which are the real object of his dim vision, his uncertain desire, and inexpressible want? Which bear consolation to the house of mourning? Which brighten the great mystery of the grave? Which safely moor his hopes? Which expand and fill his heart with joy? All these solemnly interesting questions must receive an affirmative answer. But this system of doctrine perfectly meets his case. It sheds a flood of light upon the mind of man. It contains the very truths which are essential to remove ignorance from the human mind, and to satisfy its inquiries. The true light which sound doctrine reflects, eclipses the "stars of mystic theology," overpowers with its noon-day effulgence the feeble glimmerings of philosophy, and annihilates the "ghosts and spectres which walk in darkness."

Is man guilty? Is he conscious that he is amenable to the law of the sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that he has broken that law? Is he unable to ascertain, either from the volume of nature, systems of philosophy, or his own conscience, whether his sins admit of any atonement? Are all his presumptions against this supposition? Then how gloomy and hopeless must he feel his condition to be! But here, again, his case is met by sound doctrine. It exhibits Christ as the great propitiation for sin, opening a channel through which mercy may flow in a stream of salvation to the sincere penitent. It offers pardon to the guilty, and specifies the terms on which it may be obtained. It assures the sinner that if he will accept of it on these terms, that though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, that he shall be sprinkled with the blood of atonement, and that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, will shine into his heart, to give the light of the

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knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Is man depraved? Is his nature altogether corrupt? Does universal history establish this truth? Is the carnal mind enmity against God? Is man without God in the world? Has he lost the life, the holy image of God, from his soul? Here, also, sound doctrine meets his case. It directs the sinner to seek the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, by which he must be created anew in righteousness after the image of God. In a word, it assures him of the efficiency of the Holy Spirit to effect this new creation—this most momentous change.

Is man naturally stupid? Does it require powerful motives to influence him? Are all the motives of reason ineffectual to arouse him to pursue the more excellent way? Sound doctrine presents motives, the most moving and spirit-stirring which can be conceived. It informs man that he is an accountable being; that this is his only state of probation; that all his actions have a bearing upon his future destiny; that according as he now sows, hereafter he shall reap. It presents the allurements of heaven, the warnings of hell, and the attractions of the "blood of sprinkling." It thunders anathemas of withering terror against the obstinate rejecter of Christ and his gospel. It presents before him the doctrine of a future judgment, and the tremendous issues of that judgment, than which more powerful motives cannot be found. Let the sinner but candidly examine these motives, and he cannot but be alarmed for his safety, and in the bitterness of his anguish cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" This admirable adaptation to the state and condition of man cannot be found in any of the systems of natural religion, either ancient or modern. They are all radically defective, and have never reached the exigencies of a race of fallen beings. Some modern systems, though professedly Christian, are as defective in many important respects, as are the various systems of natural religion, or paganism. Now I ask, if the exquisite adaptation of this system of doctrine to the wants of man is not conclusive evidence of its soundness?

5. *Finally, the soundness of this system of doctrine is demonstrated by its efficiency.*

We may well view this as the most efficient system of doctrine ever promulged. For what other system, either ancient or modern, can compete with it in this respect? Others may be plausible in theory, but fail in their application. Philosophy had the world to itself for several thousand years; but it was powerless; it failed to accomplish the ends proposed. The inefficiency of modern systems of science has been incontestably proved, and that, too, by most humiliating and melancholy facts.

How inefficient to effect the great purposes of true religion are the various systems of heathen mythology! What is the moral in-

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fluence of Hindooism, the very Moloch of the heathen world, but a blast which withers and desolates? How deleterious is the influence of Mohammedanism! It is in truth a most deadly poison, communicating death to the human soul. It is a compound of deceit, ignorance and lust. It employs the most debasing and impure motives. In short, it deserves not even the sorry credit of leaving men as good as it found them; after compassing sea and land to make proselytes, it makes them manifold more the children of wickedness and of hell than before. Such also is the influence of numerous other systems, whether pagan or professedly Christian.

But this system of doctrine, not only as it respects its sublimity, but as to its efficacy and pure moral tendency, must be acknowledged to be the glory of all systems. It is the gospel, the pure Christianity preached by the apostles and evangelists, which, in a moral sense, turned the world upside down; struck the heathen oracles dumb; threw down pagan temples, and subverted systems of false religion. It failed not to produce a moral reformation wherever it was preached. With its own intrinsic excellence as its only recommendation, and the God of heaven as its only patron, it triumphed over the opposition of men and devils, and multiplied its converts like the drops of morning dew. When it is faithfully preached, it comes to the people not in word only, but in power, and in much assurance. In the hands of its primitive and modern promulgators, it has proved to be the sword of the Spirit, piercing the soul; the word of God, quick and powerful; breaking the flinty heart in pieces; dispelling moral darkness, and disturbing the slumbers of sin. And, though they have had to encounter the criminal indifference of an unbelieving world, the arts of philosophy, and the virulence of relentless but unmerited persecution, their career has been marked with glory and distinguished success. And while other systems, and many of them bearing the Christian name, have been found by experiment, long and melancholy experiment, to be totally inefficacious as schemes of salvation, and some of them have passed away; this system has lived, extended its influence, and presents as its memorials, the holiness and happiness of a great multitude which no man can number, whose names are written in heaven, and who are the living epistle of this system, known and read of all men. The moral effects of this system are exactly correspondent to those of the Christian system, preached by the apostles, which fact identifies the one with the other. It was this system which illumined the tabernacles of the Athanasians, Waldenses, Albigenses and Gazares during the dark and iron ages of superstition and error; and though the light was sufficient to render visible the surrounding darkness, yet the darkness comprehended it not. The bright beams of this system have never been extinct; though they were for a season

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partially obscured, veiled, and shone rather dimly, yet at length they emerged from their concealment; assumed their original splendor; shed a glory upon the path of Luther; made him a burning and a shining light; revealed the abominations of the papal hierarchy; and opened a new and glorious era in the history of the Christian world. It was the revival of the spirit and purity of this system, which produced in England, about one century since, a most astonishing moral phenomenon, which continues to be the wonder of the world, or a moral revolution, which is still advancing and affecting the surrounding nations. When lifeless forms, vain and empty professions of Christianity, together with infidelity, threatened to annihilate pure Christianity; when the gloomy night of irreligion and error was growing darker and darker, and more and more fearfully portentous; when Zion's watchmen were slumbering upon her walls; in a word, when both church and state were verging towards a most solemn crisis; then, at such an interesting period, there appeared in the moral firmament a few stars of immense magnitude, which were as bridegrooms coming out of their chambers, and rejoicing as strong men to run a race. Their going forth was from the one end of the kingdom, and their circuit unto the ends of it, and vast multitudes felt the heat and powerful influence of the pure and heavenly rays which they reflected. The moral aspect of England was changed; the parched ground became a pool; the dry land abounded with springs of water. Star after star arose, which, in the firmament of usefulness, shone with superior splendor and glory These holy men of God, embracing, in the mighty grasp of their benevolent designs, the whole world, not only the distant parts of that nation, but also distant continents and islands of the sea, were soon blest with the light, and transforming influence of sound doctrine.

The rapid increase, both of the velocity and magnitude of "the stone cut out without hands," has been cause of wonder and admiration. It is destined to fill the whole earth. This system of sound doctrine shines as the morning, and sends forth its light afar off, mantling the minds of men, and "tinging the clouds of heathenism with a lustre lovely and beautiful as the day-spring." It has lighted the flame of benevolence upon thousands and tens of thousands of altars. It has opened channels in which the tide of Christian charity has flowed, sparkling and fresh; bearing on its waters burdens of blessings, fertilizing the sterile earth. It has something more truly grand and sublime than moon-beam speculations to boast; zeal and enterprise, and all the spirit-stirring virtues, rousing to deeds of holy daring; these are its laurels, its brightening glory.

Now I ask if the efficiency of this system of doctrine does not prove it to be sound? This is a most important test of the truth or

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soundness of any system, especially to unlettered men, while it fails not powerfully to influence the learned. Would it be possible for a system of error to effect what this system has effected? Can error reform and save men? fill them with joy here, and brighten their prospects beyond the grave? But thousands and tens of thousands can say, We are not ashamed of this gospel system, for it is the power of God unto salvation. They can assert with emphasis they know it to be true, from the testimony of their own hearts. For they that believe have the witness in themselves.

This system of doctrine which I have proposed, having stood the ordeal of the severest tests, challenges the ready credence of all men. It is divine in its origin, being legitimately deduced from the Holy Scriptures. It is from heaven, and not of men. It is not proposed as a human system, but as the infallible truth of God. The doctrines composing this system "are the doctrines of eternal reason; and though human reason could never have found them out, yet, when revealed, it approves and applauds them." This is a system of wholesome doctrines, doctrines which are according to Godliness, to the evidences of which the highest intellects have yielded. Here we have the import of that commandment which St. Paul charged Timothy to keep without spot. This is the truth which, when experimentally known, makes free, and in which we are to be settled and grounded; the truth which we are to buy, and sell not. It is the faith once delivered to the saints, for which we are earnestly to contend. Yea, this is the gospel of the kingdom, which is to be preached in all the world for a witness. And must not the consequences, either to men or angels, who shall presume to preach any other gospel, be most fearfully tremendous?

I now proceed to consider briefly—

II. THE AFFECTING PREDICTION IN MY TEXT—"THE TIME WILL COME WHEN MEN WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE."

This prediction indicated that sound doctrine would become a very unpopular system. Indeed, such has ever been its character among certain descriptions of men, from its first promulgation as an entire and perfect system. Such were the discrepancies between it and the corrupted Jewish system, that the Jews could not endure it,—it was to them a stumbling-block. Such was its total unlikeness, in its most prominent features, to any of the systems of philosophy then in vogue, that, to the advocates of those systems, it was foolishness; they could not endure it. Other systems were in perfect accordance with the corrupt principles of a depraved heart, possessed attractions for every feeling of the human frame; contained every thing that could strike the senses, and please the imaginations of

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men. But of the fine ornaments, the outward splendor, with which they plumed themselves, intent to attract and captivate, sound doctrine was destitute; nay, it even condemned them. It was an exclusive system, and demanded immediate reception; required obedience to its moral precepts and obligations, without respect to rank, talent or reputation. Its duties and obligations extended equally to the palace and the cottage; to the refined and the illiterate. Sound doctrine proclaimed disaster and ruin to the wicked, if they did not cease to do wickedly. The people, high and low, rich and poor, corrupt as they were, would not brook a system of religion which prohibited all gratifications of the flesh, to which they were very closely wedded; they viewed it as without beauty, form or comeliness. And its divine Author has never, like the founders of the Roman, Grecian, Egyptian, and Mohammedan systems of religion, employed political machinery, coercive measures, to establish and extend its popularity. But the prediction referred, more particularly, to times then future. The time will come, the latter times, and last days, have the same meaning, and refer to the times of Christianity. There has been no one period in the history of the Christian church, in which this prediction, since it was penned, has not been fulfilled. The mystery of iniquity was even then working. The spirit of error, of Antichrist, was even then in the world. Many were then "swerving from the truth, and turning aside unto vain jangling, giving heed to fables and endless genealogies, which ministered questions rather than godly edifying." The numerous innovations attempted upon pure Christianity, the many attempts at corrupting it, and the numberless departures from it, establish the prediction, that men will not endure sound doctrine.

The Gnostics corrupted sound doctrine by blending with it the false and grossly absurd tenets of the Oriental philosophy. The Origenists, in effect, merged it into the Platonic system of philosophy, and thus rendered it powerless as a scheme of salvation. The Manicheans corrupted sound doctrine by a profane blending of it with the doctrine of the Magi. The Nazareans effected its corruption by blending it with Judaism. The Pelagians and Arians present most melancholy instances of departure from sound doctrine, by renouncing its most prominent and essential features. A vast number of other sects, which flourished during some of the first centuries, gave evidence, by the vague and absurd notions which they broached, that, with them, sound doctrine was unpopular; that they could not endure it. But the Roman Catholic corruption of pure Christianity was the most prominent of all. St. Paul painted this to the very life, in several predictions which have been most conclusively applied to them by Bishop Newton.

The Greek church, also, a branch of the Roman Catholic, has

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long presented a most fearful departure from sound doctrine. And since the celebrated Reformation from the dogmas and superstitions of popery, many of the former heresies have been revived, and multiplied new ones have been broached; yea, like swarms of locusts, which God sent to vex the Egyptians, they have poured forth upon the Christian world. And those which now obtain are very numerous, and most fearfully alarming in their Antichristian influence. Many creeds professedly Christian are most manifestly defective. Some of them are merely systems of ethics, elevated but a little above Deism, or heathen philosophy. They deny the entire depravity of human nature; the real divinity of Christ; the infinite efficacy of the atonement; the absolute necessity of regeneration; the reality and necessity of a divine influence in effecting the important work of regeneration; deny that the present life is a period of probation; the certainty of a future judgment; the eternity of future rewards and punishments; and that the Scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith and practice. Those creeds which reject all or either of the above essential principles of sound doctrine must be blighting and ruinous in their tendency to the souls of men; they induce unconcern about the momentous interests of the undying soul; lull the conscience to sleep, crying Peace, when God has not spoken peace; when destruction is even at the door.

Many of the professed friends of Christianity there are who transgress and abide not in the doctrine of Christ; will not endure sound doctrine; who have need to be "rebuked sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Yea, vast multitudes there are, in this and other Christian countries, who will not endure sound doctrine; but turn away their ears from the truth, and turn unto fables. Many reject the whole system of Christianity, "as a cunningly devised fable," though they may never have candidly examined one of the numerous, powerful, conclusive and sweeping arguments which it furnishes of its own truth. The prominent features of their character have been sketched by the unerring pencil of inspiration. "There shall come, in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming? This know, also, that, in the last days, perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unthankful, unholy, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, men of corrupt minds, resisting the truth, reprobate concerning the faith, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." "But a dreadful sound shall be in their ears. Wo unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, for reward, and shall perish in the gainsaying of Core.

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Clouds they are, without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Is it not clear, from the view which has been taken of the affecting prediction in the text, that it has been fulfilling through successive centuries, from the time it was uttered, down to the present? and is it not equally clear, that it is now receiving a very general accomplishment?

Inferences.

1. *From this subject, it is evident that there is in the human mind a powerful and most alarming tendency to reject truth, and embrace error.* Truth and error are two contending powers, which, for nearly six thousand years, have divided the moral creation of God. And, notwithstanding truth assimilates man to the nature and character of his Maker, and points him to an eternity of intellectual and moral pleasures; and error assimilates him to the evil spirits which fell both in nature and disposition, mars his happiness here, and spreads a most gloomy and fearful uncertainty over his future destiny; yet such is the blind infatuation of man, that error is preferred before truth. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

We may view the empire of error as a circle, of which there are but three steps from the centre to the circumference. The outer circumference includes erroneous views of the sublime doctrines of revelation. The second or middle circle embraces Deism, or the rejection of the whole system of revelation. And the innermost circle comprises universal skepticism.

There is in error a most fearful advance; it exerts an astonishing influence over men, clouding their intellects; warping their understandings; propelling them forward in its appalling and endless labyrinths. Like the whirlpool, it draws whatever comes within its circle towards its centre. Beware, therefore, of the influence of error; if you get within the outer circle, you are in imminent danger of being whirled to the fearful centre; of being engulfed in the yawning vortex of perdition. This is the idol around which a deceitful lustre has been thrown, by which millions have been dazzled and snared; the idol monster which painters and sculptors, poets and historians, philosophers and divines, have been engaged in combination to surround with a blaze of glory, and crown with immortality. But let this great Moloch, on whose altars have been sacrificed, not hecatombs of beasts, merely, but myriads of immortal souls, be stripped of all his fine ornaments; let him be unveiled to the

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discerning eye in all his naked deformity. In a word, let him be shorn of the deceitful lustre, the dazzling glare of false glory, which have, from time immemorial, concealed his real character, his native ugliness, from the eyes of erring, misjudging mortals; and will not the spell which binds his votaries be broken, his power be gone?

2. *Finally, we learn from this subject, that it is of the highest importance to embrace and become established in sound doctrine—in the truth.* There is no neutral ground between truth and error. All are on one side or the other of the dividing line of the two empires. On which side of this separating line are you, my friends? To what king have you sworn allegiance; to the King of truth, or of error? Are you enjoying princely dignity, heavenly honors, pure, refined, and satisfying pleasures in the cause of truth? or are you submitting to debasing slavery, cruel bondage, lawless misrule, and perpetual disappointment in the cause of error? Let it be known whether you are the friends and advocates of truth or of error, of sound doctrine or of a defective theology? It is of deep and everlasting moment that you embrace the truth; that you give it your influence and support; that your heart be established with grace. Heed not for a moment the false maxim, which may be reiterated in your ears, that "one man's opinions are as good as another's," that "man is no more answerable for his religious creed, than for the hue of his skin."

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." Beware "lest any man beguile you from the truth with enticing words!" "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Be not alarmed at the cry of unpopularity. That the system of doctrine which has been proposed and vindicated in this discourse is unpopular, is readily admitted. It was so in the apostolic age; it has ever been so. But its unpopularity establishes most conclusively its soundness, its divinity. Will you reject sound doctrine, when you are convinced of its divine origin and excellence, merely because it is unpopular? because it excites the enmity of the carnal mind? because it will not harmonize with the views, feelings, and principles of the unrenewed man? On this principle you might reject the whole Bible, and deny the existence of a holy and just God. Will you cleave to error merely because it is the most popular? Will you indeed sell your souls for popularity? What shall it profit you if you gain the whole world, and lose your own souls? Has popularity more influence over you than the undying interests of your immortal souls? Are you halting between sound theology and a defective creed, between the momentous concerns of the soul, and the brief honors of the world? Decide at once. At once yield to the persuasive, the thrilling, the heavenly eloquence

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of sound doctrine. For it is perfect, converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, enduring for ever; more to be desired is sound doctrine than gold, yea, than fine gold, sweeter than honey.

To embrace sound doctrine is of eternal moment, therefore seek it as silver, search for it as for hid treasures. Exalt it, and it will promote you. It conducts to certain honor those who embrace it. It is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it, and happy is every one who retaineth it. Take fast hold of sound doctrine, let it not go; keep it, for it is your life. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." "FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT, IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS."

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SERMON XIV.

BY REV. TOBIAS SPICER,

PRESIDING ELDER ON CHAMPLAIN DISTRICT, VERMONT.

GRACE AND WORKS UNITED.

PHIL. II. 12, 13.

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING. FOR IT IS GOD WHICH WORKETH IN YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE.

WHAT shall I do to be saved? This is a question of unspeakable importance to every individual of the human family. Every other question shrinks into nothing when compared with this. This embraces time and eternity,—the life that now is, and that endless life which is to come. This question is, however, answered very differently by different men, according to their different views of the plan of salvation.

Some there are who believe that the salvation of all mankind is secured in a way which excludes all human efforts. Such having embraced the first axiom of the gospel, namely, that salvation is by *grace*, do not know how to reconcile it with the idea that any human effort is necessary to obtain salvation.

Others there are who suppose that God laid a plan by which to save a certain part of the human family,—"a certain definite number, which cannot be increased nor diminished." This plan, they readily admit, includes human agency, nay, absolutely secures human agency in such a way that the means are as sure as the end. This plan takes its origin in what its abettors are pleased to call "the eternal decrees of God, whereby for his own glory he hath foreordained whatever comes to pass." According to this plan, those who are elected to be saved, and those only, were *redeemed* by Christ, those and those only are *effectually* called by the Holy Spirit, and made willing to comply with the terms of the gospel. Such are regenerated, and cannot fall away so as to finally perish.

But, between these discordant views, truth occupies a middle sta-

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tion; it fills a place between these two extremes. If we regulate our views of the plan of salvation by the Holy Scriptures, it will appear, when those Scriptures are properly understood, that God has not secured the salvation of all men, nor yet of a certain number of men, in such a way that they cannot miss of heaven. But he has made ample provision for all, by the gift of his Son Jesus Christ to taste death for all, and by giving the Holy Spirit to enlighten all. So that all who will comply with the conditions of the gospel, together with those in every nation where the gospel is not explicitly known, who fear God and work righteousness, are, through the merits of Christ, accepted by God, and shall be finally saved.

The passage we have selected as a foundation for some remarks, is calculated to confirm the above view. But, in order to make the subject more clear, I shall pursue the following method:

I. BRIEFLY SHOW WHAT GOD HAS DONE, AND IS STILL DOING, TO SAVE THE CHILDREN OF MEN. AND,

II. SHOW WHAT WE MUST DO IN ORDER TO BE SAVED.

The subject will then afford some practical improvement.

I. I SHALL BRIEFLY SHOW WHAT GOD HAS DONE, AND IS STILL DOING, TO SAVE THE CHILDREN OF MEN.

1. *The great foundation on which all our hopes of salvation must rest, is what God has done for us in giving his Son Jesus Christ to die for us.* Such are the perfections of the divine Being, and such is the character of sin, that no sinner can entertain the least hope of salvation, only through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Sin is an insult offered to every perfection of Jehovah. It denies his sovereignty, it is contrary to his holiness, it questions his wisdom, it abuses his goodness, doubts his veracity, and offers defiance to his almighty power. The sinner tramples on the laws of his rightful Sovereign, and thereby exposes himself to his eternal displeasure.

How is the honor of these laws of God to be maintained, and how are the claims of Eternal Justice to be satisfied, but by the eternal destruction of the sinner? The only way seems to be, the way which infinite wisdom has discovered, and which is revealed to us in the gospel. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,"—who has "tasted death for every man," and thereby become the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world,"—"that the world through him might be saved." Yet, not only was an atoning sacrifice necessary in order to the salvation of sinners, but—

2. *It was necessary that the Holy Spirit should be sent into the world, to enlighten the mind and quicken the souls of men who are "dead in trespasses and sins;" for such is the nature of sin, that it*

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not only offers insult to God, but it also infuses depravity into the character and the very nature of man. The understanding is thereby darkened that it sees no beauty in the things of God:—the will is so perverted that it does not naturally conform to the will of God:—and the affections are so alienated that they do not cleave to God as the supreme object of their delight. All the moral powers, and all the passions of the human soul, are completely out of tune. They need the enlightening and quickening influence of the Holy Spirit to regulate them, and purify the soul for the enjoyment of God. The sinner needs pardon and sanctification to restore him to the favor and image of God; and nothing short of divine influence can accomplish this work in us. A portion of this influence is given unto us, to work in us "both to WILL and to do."

1. *God worketh in us by his Holy Spirit* "TO WILL;"—that is, as I understand the apostle, the Holy Spirit enlighteneth the mind, and thereby maketh it capable of seeing the beauty there is in divine truth; and not only of seeing its beauty and fitness, but by this divine influence the mind is enabled "to will," that is, to *resolve* or *choose* to obey it.

What is that which we call "will?" Is it what some imagine, namely, a certain distinct faculty of the soul, which constitutes one of its component parts, and which predominates over all our other faculties? This, I am aware, is the idea which many form of the will; but I conceive it to be a wrong idea, and calculated to mislead us respecting the economy of salvation.

In what passage of Holy Scripture is the "will" considered as a distinct faculty of the soul? Might we not as well say that love, desire, and hope, are distinct faculties? What are these but certain *exercises* or *actions* of the mind? The mind is capable of loving, desiring, and hoping; and these *exercises* are love, desire, and hope,—so the mind is capable of *choosing* and *refusing*, and this exercise we may call the will. Hence it appears that "will" is more properly defined, when we say it is the *action* of the mind.

The will, therefore, so far from being the ruling faculty of the mind, does not bear rule at all, but is altogether subject to the mind, and, properly speaking, is not a faculty, unless we mean by faculty nothing more than the power which the mind possesses to exercise itself in choosing or refusing an object which may be presented to it.

St. Paul, speaking of the time when his eyes were opened to see the requirements of the gospel, says, "to will is present with me;" by which I understand him to mean, that "to *choose* was within his power."

By what means is the mind of a fallen creature, whose moral powers are all depraved, made capable of choosing the right, and refusing that which is wrong? To this question the declaration of the apostle in our text gives an answer:—"It is God that worketh in you to

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will;" that is, the Holy Spirit, by its enlightening and quickening influence, worketh in our minds, and thereby discovers to us that which is good, and enables us to choose it in preference to evil.

2. *It is according to the "good pleasure" of God, not only to enable sinful man "to will," but also "to do" what the gospel requires.* That is, he not only enables us to *resolve* on doing something, but he enables us to *perform* that upon which we have resolved. By the quickening influence of his Holy Spirit he enables us to repent of our sins; and he also enables all those to believe in Christ to whom he is presented by the preaching of the gospel. By the Spirit's gracious influence he enables us to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly and righteously," and to "take up our cross and follow Christ."

Now without this divine and gracious influence, the mind of fallen and depraved sinners can neither "will" nor "do" any thing acceptable to God. But, enabled by this influence, this "working within" us, sinners, although depraved in all their moral powers, and consequently entirely helpless, are enabled both to "will" and to "do" what God requires of them. This is in exact accordance with the declaration of St. Paul, Phil. iv. 13. "I can DO all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

This ability "to will" and "to do" cannot, with any propriety, be called "*natural*," for if it be natural, all men naturally possess it; then the doctrine of total depravity cannot be true. Moreover, Christ expressly says, "without me ye *can do* nothing; and the apostle declares not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.

Neither is it most proper to call this ability a moral ability, because the term *moral* does not seem sufficiently descriptive. It certainly is far more proper to call it *supernatural*, or "gracious;" for our text informs us that "it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his 'good pleasure.'" And St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, declares, "our sufficiency is of God."

II. HAVING BRIEFLY SHOWN WHAT GOD HAS DONE, AND IS STILL DOING, TO SAVE SINFUL MEN, I SHALL, IN THE SECOND PLACE, PROCEED TO SHOW WHAT MUST BE DONE ON THE PART OF MAN, IN ORDER TO SECURE THE SALVATION OF HIS SOUL.

1. *We must "will," that is, we must resolve.* When the Holy Spirit "worketh in us," enlightening the mind, alarming the conscience, and showing the exceeding sinfulness of sin, we must resolve to break off from sin and turn to God. It is not sufficient that we see the truth, or that we have a discovery of our duty. It is not sufficient that the mind is seriously impressed with divine things, so far as to be sensible of the need of a Saviour. It is not sufficient that a man feels desir-

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ous to flee from the wrath to come. There is a resolution to be formed, and until this is done, but very little is done towards securing his salvation. Good desires carry us but a little way towards heaven; there must be a determination of the mind. We must *resolve* on seeking God, and on pursuing the way to eternal life. Although the salvation of a sinner does not wholly depend on the conformity of his will to the will of God, yet without this, good desires are not perfected, and good actions are never performed.

2. *We must not only "will," but we must also "do."* It is required of us both "to will" and "to do;" that is, we must not only *resolve* on obedience to God, but we must also *perform* that obedience God requires of us. As we have already remarked respecting good desires, that they accomplish nothing unless followed by resolutions; so we may say of resolutions, they amount to nothing unless reduced to practice.

Repentance and faith are the conditions on which the gospel promises pardon to the guilty. "Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, and learn to do well." This was the language of the evangelical prophet. Isa. i. 16. To the same effect, and nearly in the same language, is the exhortation of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, and on another occasion. "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And when the jailer of Philippi inquired of the apostles what he should do to be saved, they answered him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "God has commanded all men every where to repent," and he requires all to whom the gospel is preached, to "believe on him whom he hath sent" to be the Saviour of sinners.

Not only are repentance and faith required as the conditions of pardon; but a life of self-denial, of watchfulness and prayer, and perseverance in holiness, are the conditions on which salvation is promised to Christ's followers. Our Saviour says, Matt. xxiv. 13. "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." Again, in Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." And our Lord has repeatedly declared that whoso does not "bear his cross," and "come after him," is not "worthy of him," and "cannot be his disciple."

III. WE COME NOW, THIRDLY, TO MAKE SOME IMPROVEMENT OF THE VIEW WE HAVE TAKEN OF THIS SUBJECT.

1. *We see the connection there is between free grace in God and free will in man.* God worketh, and we must work. It is by God's free grace that salvation is provided, and it is by an exercise of man's free will that this salvation is obtained. And thus it is, that

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all the glory is secured to God, and that all the duty devolves on man.

We are frequently asked how salvation can be all of grace, if works are necessary? To this inquiry we are now prepared to give an answer. It was *grace* that first designed this glorious plan. It was by the *grace* of God that Jesus Christ *tasted death* for every man; it is by the *grace* of God that the Holy Spirit is sent into the world. It is owing to the *grace* of God that a sinner is brought to see his danger and become penitent; by grace he is enabled to seek the Lord and believe in the Saviour. It is by *grace* that his sins are pardoned, and his heart changed; and it is grace that enables him to do all the good that he does through life,—bears with his numerous infirmities, purifies his heart, and finally admits him to eternal joys on high. Therefore, every good man on earth, and every saint in heaven, may exclaim with the apostle, "By the GRACE of God I am what I am."

Again, we are frequently told that St. Paul says, "We are saved by grace; and if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace."

To this we reply, the meaning of the apostle, in the words above quoted, we conceive to be this. 1st. That perfect obedience to God's law is not the condition of a sinner's acceptance with God. 2d. That we cannot render ourselves acceptable to God by works of the ceremonial law which was given by Moses. 3d. That the conditions of our acceptance with God are repentance and faith; but, however, even the works of repentance and faith and holy living do not merit salvation; but we are "saved by GRACE," and not for any "works of righteousness" which we have done.

The apostle did not design to exclude works of every kind, and in every sense, from the economy of man's salvation; for then even repentance and believing would be excluded,—these are certainly works of the mind. If repentance and faith and every good work have nothing to do in securing our salvation, then the exhortation of St. Paul in our text, and, indeed, all the commands and exhortations in the Bible, are words of no meaning.

2. *We see the importance of embracing and holding up correct views of the plan of salvation.* We would not be understood to mean that no man can be saved unless his religious opinions are perfectly correct. Such a conclusion would be erroneous. Equally erroneous would it be, to suppose that "it matters not what a man believes, if his heart is right;" for a man's heart is not as likely to become right, or to remain right, whose views of the plan of salvation are wrong, as he who entertains correct views. This is so evident that it needs no proof. Neither is that minister as useful, or as likely to win souls to Christ, who entertains wrong views of the economy of grace, as he whose views are correct.

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One principal reason why the ministry of Mr. Wesley, and others in connection with him, has been attended with such unparalleled success, is, that they have uniformly held up the doctrines of the gospel. They have steadily maintained the doctrine of human depravity, general atonement, justification by faith, the necessity of repentance, and holiness of heart and life. These doctrines they have urged on the consciences of both saints and sinners, and their word has been attended with power in the conversion of many thousands of perishing sinners.

So did the apostles of our Lord labor, clearly exhibiting the plan of salvation, and preaching repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is a system of truth which must be exhibited to the understanding, and closely applied to the conscience. This is the "word of God," it is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This is "the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls." The truth of the gospel must never be minced.

> "Shall I for fear of feeble man
> Soften God's word, or smooth my tongue?"

If ministers expect success in their ministry, let them show clearly the plan of salvation,—let them "not shun to declare the whole counsel of God." Let them carefully draw the line of distinction between truth and error.

It is an ancient prediction, found in Jer. iii. 15, that God will give to his people "pastors after his own heart," which shall "feed them with knowledge and understanding." Let us never lose sight of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, especially free grace in God, and free will in man. These are mighty weapons to pull down the strong hold of Satan. These are mighty battering rams to break in upon the sinner's conscience, and rouse him from slumber to flee from the wrath which is to come.

3. *The view we have taken of the plan of salvation lays a foundation for exertion and ardor in ministers of the gospel.* I remember a gentleman once remarked to me, that there was one thing in the sermons of Methodist ministers which he greatly admired, which was the close application they generally made of the subject to their hearers. In this he thought the ministers of his own denomination were generally too defective; their sermons consisted more of explication than exhortation. I replied, that according to the views entertained by the ministers of his denomination, there was but very little occasion for men to be exhorted to the performance of duty, for what avails any thing which they can do? Their destiny was eternally fixed by God's decree; and all the means that lead thereto! Why

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exhort men to do works, the performance of which with far the greatest part of mankind would avail nothing? Or, if they would avail, are all secured by sovereign grace, and cannot fail to be performed.

But if salvation be conditional, if a work must be performed by sinners in order to obtain salvation, and if God worketh in us by his Holy Spirit, thereby enabling us both "to will" and "to do," then are sinners without excuse before God; then may the minister cry aloud and spare not, and warn them to flee the wrath to come. If Christ tasted death for every man, and sincerely offers his grace to all; then may ministers fervently exhort all men to flee to the outstretched arms of a compassionate Saviour, who is able, and *willing* too, to save all that come unto God by him. Here is ground for preaching, exhortation, prayer, and praise.

4. *The foregoing view which we have taken of the plan of salvation brings us to a very fearful point.*

1. *If we would be saved from our sins here, and from hell hereafter, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.* All that God has done, or has promised yet to do, will not save us without *we work*. Nothing will excuse us from repentance. "God has commanded all men every where to repent." Nothing will do instead of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." And nothing will answer as a substitute for self-denial and bearing the cross. For Christ said, "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple."

2. *We must work now.* There are many who seem convinced of the necessity of doing something in order to secure eternal life; but think there is, however, sufficient time to do this hereafter.

Let such remember that God declares, "NOW is the accepted time, and TO-DAY is the day of salvation." Will the youth delay this work until middle age, thinking that a more suitable season? Let him remember, the cares of life will be very likely to exclude the thoughts of dying. And let him also remember, that his heart will grow harder the longer he remains impenitent. His sinful habits will be more confirmed, and the difficulty of doing this work will probably be increased a hundred fold.

Will the man in middle age delay this work till old age, thinking that will be a more convenient season? Let such remember the exceeding uncertainty of human life, and also how very few are known to commence this work after they have passed the age of fifty years.

And let the aged remember that, if they have left this important work undone till now, that *now* is the time for them to work, and *now* is the only time. If NOW is not improved by them, this work with them will remain eternally undone.

3. *The point is still more fearful as we advance; for if we work*

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not, we must perish. "He that, being often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." We must work or perish. It is a great work that lies on our hands, and we have but a very short time allowed us in which to perform this great work. We should *fear* lest the harvest shall be past and the summer be ended, and we not saved. We should *tremble* at the recollection of the greatness of our danger, if we are neglecters of this salvation; FOR HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?

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SERMON XV.

BY REV. TOBIAS SPICER,
PRESIDING ELDER ON CHAMPLAIN DISTRICT, VERMONT.

UNITY AMONG BRETHREN.

PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY!

A KNOWLEDGE of our relation to God and our fellow creatures, is of great importance to every man. This knowledge, God has been pleased to impart to us by means of the Holy Scriptures. Here our various duties to God and man are clearly brought to view, and the performance of these duties is essential to constitute the Christian character.

In numerous passages, and especially in the one just recited, the Scriptures contemplate men as being brethren, children of the same parent, and members of the same family. Here the inspired writer earnestly recommends harmony and brotherly love. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

The method I purpose to pursue in illustrating these words of the Psalmist is as follows—

I. BRIEFLY SHOW IN WHAT RESPECTS MEN MAY BE SAID TO BE BRETHREN.

II. INQUIRE WHAT COURSE WE MUST PURSUE, IF WE WOULD PROMOTE UNITY AMONG OUR BRETHREN. AND—

III. I SHALL URGE THE PURSUIT OF THIS COURSE BY SEVERAL ARGUMENTS.

I. WE NOTICE IN WHAT RESPECTS MEN MAY BE SAID TO BE BRETHREN.

1. *It may be said that all men are brethren by* CREATION; *for as*

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the Apostle declares, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." We are all the offspring of Adam Whatever diversity of color is to be found among men, must be accounted for on other principles, than a variety of origin. We all sprang from Adam as our common father; and the same Almighty hand has formed us all. Whether born among the burning sands of Arabia, or within the frigid zones of more northern climes, we are brethren. Whether we belong to Afric's sable race, consigned to slavery and toil, or whether we are the free born sons of liberty; we all came from the same original stock, and are brethren by nature's ties. The master and his slave, the king and all his subjects, although so differently circumstanced in life, are equals in the estimation of the great Creator, and should regard each other as brethren: for the rich and poor meet together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all.

2. *All who are true Christians are brethren by ties most sacred, and they should regard each other in this light.* "They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They are "born not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible," by the word of God. This spiritual regeneration is indispensably necessary to constitute us the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Except we are thus "born again," our Lord most positively declares, we "cannot see the kingdom of heaven." All who are thus born again are the "children of God by adoption," "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," to an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" "if so be," says the Apostle, "we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together." Such as are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds, and none but such, are Christians, properly speaking.

Now whatever difference there may be among Christians in respect to their views of the plan of salvation, so long as they hold fast the fundamental truths of the gospel, and retain the divine favor; so long as they fear God and work righteousness; they are accepted by him, and ought to have fellowship one with another. Although it must be acknowledged that correctness of opinion in matters of religion is of great importance, because opinions naturally tend to influence our practice; yet it is very certain that orthodoxy in our religious views will not constitute the test by which we shall be judged at the last great day.

It is certainly a strange notion that has found its way into the Christian church, for which some earnestly contend, that men must embrace precisely such an opinion of such and such subjects, in order to be Christians worthy of their fellowship; especially when

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this opinion relates only to some external ceremonies which they will readily acknowledge are not absolutely necessary to salvation.

3. *Those who are members of the same church, professing the same faith, and conforming to the same order of discipline, should regard each other as brethren in the strictest sense of the word; for they are not only fellow creatures and fellow Christians, but they have entered voluntarily into an association with each other; by which they have publicly and most solemnly pledged themselves to each other as brethren.* Thus we see that all men are related to each other by the ties of consanguinity, or of grace. And all men, to whatever nation they may belong, or in whatever part of the world they may reside; however different their circumstances may be, or whatever may be their religion, or religious views; all men should regard each other as brethren. But especially should Christians regard themselves in this light, who profess the same religion and belong to the same church. And such, perhaps, the Psalmist had more immediately in view when he said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

II. WE COME IN THE SECOND PLACE TO INQUIRE WHAT COURSE WE MUST PURSUE, IF WE WOULD PROMOTE UNITY AMONG OUR BRETHREN.

1. *It is necessary that we form correct views of our relation to God and one another.* If the great men of the earth, who possess wealth and power, imagine themselves a distinct race of beings, formed of nobler materials, and for nobler purposes than were the rest of human kind, they will continue to regard themselves as born to rule, and all beside as destined to obey. They will play the tyrant, and trample on the lives and liberties of their fellow men. The world will still remain a scene of warfare and of blood.

The golden rule laid down by our Lord should be remembered and sacredly regarded by all men; "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This rule should form the grand principle of all our actions in all our dealings with our fellow creatures. Whoever departs from this, so far as his influence extends, severs the bonds of unity, and contributes to introduce discord and wretchedness among the children of men.

There is a spirit of selfishness in our world which greatly mars our happiness. It is this spirit which induces men to grasp at all advantages, regardless of the consequences which their conduct may have on others. What desolation and confusion has this spirit spread in our wretched world. Surely men thus actuated have forgotten that "the Lord is the Maker of us all," and that "we are brethren."

2. *Not only are correct views of our relation to God and one an-*

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other necessary, but also a correct sense of justice between man and man. An all wise Providence has placed men in different circumstances in this life, and given to each unalienable rights—rights which no man is at liberty to invade. These are rights of property, of liberty, and of conscience. Of the latter we can never be deprived, and the two former may never be taken away until we have forfeited them by some voluntary act of our own.

What views of justice can those men entertain who take it on themselves to determine how others shall think, and what they *shall* believe? To his "own master" must not "every one stand or fall?" Surely in matters of mere opinion they must.

And what sense of justice can that tyrant have, who will deprive his fellow creatures of their property, or their liberty, merely because he has it in his power to do so? Verily there is a day of judgment in which such oppressors, with all others who violate the claims of justice, will be made to feel, that however self-exalted they may have been, all men by nature are equal.

3. *If we would promote unity among brethren, we must learn to distinguish between men and their religious opinions.* Notwithstanding, as has been already remarked, that our religious opinions do naturally tend to influence our practice, yet as an eminent writer somewhere observes; "mere opinions make but a small part of real religion, and should always be carefully distinguished from the persons who hold them." We should be willing to allow both candor and sincerity in persons whose sentiments differ from our own. Nay, there may be deep piety in the heart, while at the same time very erroneous notions are entertained in the head. It certainly is not a sure mark of the want of sincerity in another that he differs from me in his religious opinions, even though he may possess the same means of information that I do. Our early habits of thinking have a mighty influence on us, all our days, and the associations we form in life will have their share of influence too.

The Holy Scriptures which contain the clearest and brightest revelation of divine things which God has ever made to man, are nevertheless written in human language, which language, like every thing else belonging to fallen man, is imperfect. In human language it is too well known to be denied, that words may be differently understood: therefore though this may be the best, and indeed the only medium suited to religious instruction, yet it is not so perfect as to be impossible for men, even candid men, to err.

Some of the apostles, who had heard the "perfect Preacher preach," and were endowed with power from on high to proclaim the word of God, and by their writings to teach a dark benighted world, did nevertheless on some occasions differ from each other in their views. But though they contended sharply, it was in Chris-

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tian love. Their contention did not destroy the "unity of the spirit," nor break in sunder "the bonds of peace."

It will be recollected that John once said to our Lord, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not with us." Doubtless, he expected his zeal for his Master's cause would have been highly commended; but our Lord said unto him, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." It is to be feared, the zeal of many will carry them into bigotry, and our Lord, instead of saying, "Well done!" will say, "Who hath required these things at your hands?"

We would not be understood to insinuate that orthodoxy is of such little consequence that we may be wholly indifferent what views we or others may entertain; no, we are exhorted by an apostle to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" for it is of great importance both to ourselves and the world in which we live. But this contention should not be at the expense of "brotherly love." However men may differ in their opinions, an inspired apostle says, "Let brotherly love continue." For, behold "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

4. *If we would promote unity among brethren, we must not expect too much from them, but must make suitable allowance for the infirmities of human nature.* Human nature is fallen; all our natural and moral faculties have suffered a great loss. They are not what they were when first we came from our great Creator's hand. He created us "upright," and pronounced all things "very good;" but we "all like sheep have gone astray." It is true, grace does much for fallen nature; it restores all penitent believers to the favor of God, and stamps his image on their hearts. But notwithstanding all it does, men, while in this life, will be but imperfect creatures. We need not expect perfection in man, until this "corruptible shall have put on incorruption," and "mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

It cannot be denied that one very fruitful source of disquiet, especially in family connections, and in the church, is, we calculate on too much from fallen man. It is hence that innumerable discords arise to mar our peace and destroy our brotherly love.

5. *Another rule to be carefully observed by all who wish to promote peace and unity, is, to put the best construction we possibly can on the conduct of our brethren, and be always ready to forgive an injury.* Charity, it is said, is "not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, and *hopeth* all things." Charity, as one observes, is "the soul of social life." It inclines one to put the best construction on another's conduct, which the nature of the case will possibly bear. Our situation in life sometimes renders us widely vulnerable, and the interests of others often come in contact with our own. We seem to be assailed, our interests or our reputation suffers loss. But

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charity hopes no injury was intended; it makes not a man an offender for a word—perhaps the report may not be true; it may be an enemy is endeavoring to sow the seeds of discord and separate very friends. But if we find it is too true to be disbelieved, we should remember, "Vengeance belongs to the Lord, and he will repay the adversary." Our *dignity*, as rational beings, requires that we forgive. "It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression." If we suffer ourselves to take revenge, we are conquered, and lose the glory of the struggle; but if we forbear and forgive, we come off victors, and are crowned with more than common laurels. How far beneath the proper dignity of a man it is to seek to be revenged for every supposed or even real injury he may receive.

We should especially remember that our Saviour has declared that, except we forgive men their trespasses, our "Heavenly Father will not forgive" ours. In the prayer which he taught his disciples to use, we are instructed to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." But if we will not forgive those that injure us, but seek to take revenge, how shall we appear at the throne of grace with this petition on our lips? If we will not forgive whenever we use the words of this prayer, we pray that we may not be forgiven!

III. HAVING NOTICED THE RELATION MEN SUSTAIN TO EACH OTHER, AND THE COURSE TO BE PURSUED IN ORDER TO PROMOTE UNITY AMONG MEN; I SHALL URGE THE PURSUIT OF THIS COURSE BY SEVERAL ARGUMENTS.

1. *The peace of society requires it.* Sin has entered into our world, and death by sin. Every man has turned his hand against his brother. This world is a slaughter house, literally an Aceldama, a field of blood. And why is this? Because men have forgotten that God is their Father, and that they are all brethren. If all would strive to "dwell together in unity," the state of society would be wonderfully changed. Tyranny and oppression would entirely cease, and the oppressed would go free. Murders, robberies, and thefts, would be known no more, and men would enjoy their lives and property without molestation. Dishonesty and fraud of every kind would cease through all the wide family of man. Then would prisons and houses of correction, with which our world abounds, be needed no more. Instruments of warfare would be converted into implements of agriculture and husbandry. And the ancient prophecy would be fulfilled,—"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid." "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." O, blessed state of society, how much to be desired! when will it be realized in all its glory?—When all men shall be regulated by the pure precepts of the gospel: then shall "brethren dwell together in unity."

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2. *We urge this subject, in the second place, by the honor of our holy religion.* The most prominent feature of the Christian religion is love, universal love to God and man. When the apostle had enumerated several Christian graces, he introduces "charity," which is but another name for love; and although these Christian graces were excellencies which were not to be found in any other religion under the sun; yet he says, "the greatest of these is charity," for "charity never faileth." In the early ages of Christianity, Christians were remarkable for "dwelling together in unity," insomuch that their very enemies were constrained to say, "See how these Christians love one another."

We would not be understood as wishing to do away the distinctions which exist among Christian denominations. It is doubtless best for these distinctions to exist. Let all fight the common foe in their respective ranks, and all promote the general good in "their own way;" but let them not vex and destroy each other. Let them not bite and devour, nor bitterly contend; lest their clamor should be overheard by the wild beasts of the forest, and they should thereby be aroused to attempt our final ruin. Let every man carefully search for truth, and when he has discovered what he considers truth, let him honestly embrace it, and let him be at liberty publicly to profess it. Let all agree to let each other think uncontrolled, except as far as force of argument controls. The honor of our holy religion and the prosperity of Zion's cause require that "brethren dwell together in unity."

God is honored in the promotion and prosperity of his cause. To promote his honor should be the highest ambition of a rational being. God is jealous of his honor. When the ancient Israelites provoked him in the wilderness, he said, "I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them cease from among men, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely." "I wrought for my name's sake that it should not be polluted before the heathen." It was his honor, and the honor of his cause, that were at stake. He feared the heathen would say, "the Lord is not able to carry his people through," and in this way his cause would sustain a serious injury. Is God so jealous of his honor, and the honor of his cause? How careful ought Christians to be, lest by their conduct toward each other, they give the enemy occasion to triumph, and trample on the fair inheritance of the Lord.

3. *We urge this as one of the best evidences we can give of the genuineness of our Christian experience.* "By this," says the Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." St. John saith, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Though we have

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the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though we have all faith so that we could remove mountains; and though we were to abound in acts of benevolence, and were even to yield ourselves to martyrdom; yet if we love not our brethren, our experience is not genuine, and our religion is "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

What does religion do for us, if it does not in some measure restore us to the divine image? If it does not

> "Lay the rugged paths of peevish nature even,
> And open in the breast a little heaven?"

When we entered on our public profession, we solemnly renounced the works of the devil. And what are these works? Are they not these, "envyings, hatred, variance, wrath and strife?" But "the fruit of the Spirit is love, meekness, long-suffering and gentleness." "Every one," says the apostle, "that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

4. *We urge this, finally, from the consideration that life will soon be over, and that Christians hope to dwell together in perfect unity in the kingdom of heaven.* How very trifling many things will soon appear, that are subjects of our warmest contentions now! It will not be long till we shall awake from the fleeting scenes of human life to contemplate scenes more substantial. There is but a step between us and that eternal state, "from whose bourne no traveller returns." And what are Christians' hopes beyond this vale of tears? They hope for undying felicity in the presence of Christ and the holy angels. They hope to unite with that great multitude which no man can number; gathered from the East and West; from the North and South. In perfect unity they hope to dwell around the throne, and in joyful triumph they hope for ever to praise him, who hath loved them and washed them in his own blood. If so, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS TO SEE THEM DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY.

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SERMON XVI.

BY REV. PETER P. SANDFORD,
PRESIDING ELDER ON RHINEBECK DISTRICT, NEW YORK.

SALVATION BY FAITH.

LUKE, VII. 50.

THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE; GO IN PEACE.

THE life of our Lord Jesus Christ, as detailed by his artless and faithful biographers, is one of the most intense interest to mankind: and being filled with the most touching and interesting incidents, it is well calculated to engage the attention and the feelings of every reader. Who, except the man whose intellect is beclouded, and whose feelings are blunted by the demon prejudice, can behold this incomparable person, in the midst of friends and enemies, acquaintances and strangers, the rich and the poor, the honorable and despised, Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and sinners; in the house of rejoicing, as at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; or in the place of mourning, as in the case of the son of the widow of Nain; and at the grave of Lazarus, without being struck with the godlike wisdom for which he was so prominent, and that consistency of character, which shines forth in every act of his inimitable life? Confining ourselves, at the present, to one single train of incidents in his eventful life, let us mark the wisdom and consistency which appear in all his words and actions on that occasion.

A certain Pharisee, by the name of Simon, had given our Lord an invitation to dine at his house, and at the same time, probably, had invited certain persons of his own sect to be of the party. Being seated at the table, according to the custom of that age and country, which was to place themselves on a sofa, in a reclining posture, with their feet, from which the sandals were previously removed, behind them: a woman of no very reputable character entered the room where they were dining, approached our Lord, and began to wet his feet with her tears, to wipe them with the hairs of her head, to kiss

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them, and to anoint them with a costly and precious ointment. The master of the house, discovering that this woman was permitted to take such liberties with his guest, though he said nothing, began to reason on the subject in his own mind in the following manner: This man cannot be a prophet, although his fame is so great; for if he were a prophet, he could not be ignorant of the character of this woman, as he certainly must be, or he would not suffer her to touch him, for she is a sinner, that is, *an immoral person.* While this train of reasoning was going on in the mind of Simon, it was suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted by the voice of this suspected guest, addressed to himself, asking permission to propose a subject of conversation to him. To this Simon readily consented, little thinking that it proceeded from our Lord's knowledge of his thoughts. Having obtained Simon's consent, our Lord proceeded to state a case, to be resolved by him. "A certain creditor," said he, "had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, or *denarii*, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon, without suspecting the design of the inquiry, immediately gave his opinion, that the person who had most forgiven would feel the greatest degree of gratitude towards his benefactor. To the correctness of this opinion our Lord assented, and proceeded to apply the parable (for as such he had intended it from the beginning), to the subject of Simon's thoughts. Turning to the woman, who still was behind him, at his feet, he said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman?" *This woman,* whose conduct has so highly displeased *thee!* Contrast her conduct with thy own. I entered into thy house on thy invitation; but thou hast not treated me with common respect, as thy guest. Thou gavest me no water for my feet, though thou knewest that it was a common act of hospitality. Neither didst thou give me the kiss of peace so common amongst friends; nor anoint my head with oil, agreeably to the usual custom. But this woman has more than supplied thy lack of hospitality toward me. She has washed my *feet* with her *tears,* and wiped them with *the hairs of her head. Upon them* she has bestowed *her kisses*; and she has anointed *them* with a *precious* and costly ointment. She, therefore, has spared neither her *pains* nor her *money,* that she might show suitable respect to me as her Benefactor, and give evidence of her penitence and humility on account of her sins. "Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, *which are many,* are *forgiven;* therefore, she *loved much.*" That she has been a great sinner is known to me, and freely acknowledged. But however numerous or aggravated her sins may have been, they are forgiven: the proof of which is found in her present conduct. She owes a great debt of gratitude to me, as her Benefactor; of which she is deeply sensible; and as is evinced by her present conduct, she wishes to

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discharge it. On the contrary, he who has little or no sense of his obligation to the divine mercy, will do as thou hast done on the present occasion; for thy conduct proves that thou hast neither forgiveness, not art sensible of thy guilty and polluted condition. Be not offended with her for manifesting her penitence and humility for her sins; and her faith in, and gratitude to me, for the mercy which I have shown her. Neither shouldst thou be offended with me for permitting her to express her sense of her sins, and her gratitude for her salvation. Simon, thou must now be sensible that I can read the heart of man, and see his inmost thoughts, which is a divine prerogative; and, therefore, be not offended with what I am about to do:— and then, turning to the woman, he gave her a direct assurance of the remission of her sins.

Whatever effect this may have had upon Simon, it gave great offence to those persons who were guests with our Lord at Simon's table; and they began to reason within themselves, in a manner very unfavorable to his character. "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" What more can this Jesus of Nazareth undertake to do? They well knew that none but God could forgive the sins of men; and, therefore, they accounted our Lord a blasphemer for arrogating to himself, as they supposed, the divine prerogative. But he who best knew how to meet every objector, and to silence every objection, instead of replying to them, as he had just done to Simon, turned to the woman, and, directing his discourse immediately to her, said, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." In doing this, it appears to have been the design of our Lord to convince these objectors that they were in a state of sin and condemnation before God, for the want of *that faith* which had so peculiarly distinguished this woman, in the circumstances before them: as well as to afford a farther assurance to her that she was a subject of this salvation. How wise, how amiable, how consistent, and how godlike, is our Lord Jesus Christ in this whole transaction! Who that reads this narrative, and believes it to be true, can doubt for one moment that Jesus Christ has power upon earth to forgive sins?—"He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Who, therefore, can reasonably doubt his authority to forgive sins at the present time?

But we must turn from this interesting narrative, that we may direct our attention to the doctrine contained in our text, namely, the doctrine of salvation by faith; than which there is no truth of revealed religion more important. This will be the subject of the present discourse. And in treating on this subject, our attention will be directed to the following particulars:—

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I. THE SALVATION SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT.

II. THE CONDITION ON WHICH THIS SALVATION IS SUSPENDED: AND,—

III. THE EVIDENCE OF ITS EXISTENCE, AS AFFORDED TO SUCH AS ARE ITS SUBJECTS.

I. THIS SALVATION.

The salvation spoken of in our text is a present salvation; and consists of two distinct particulars, namely, *justification* and *renovation.*

1. *Justification is a forensic term, and signifies, to declare a person innocent, just, or righteous:—it stands opposed to condemnation.*

In an evangelical sense, justification is an act of divine grace whereby God, in his character of our Sovereign and Judge, freely, for Christ's sake, forgives us all our past sins, receives us in his favor, and takes us under his protection.

There are but two methods by which dependent responsible agents can be justified before God, namely, by *law*, and by *grace.*

A legal justification consists in declaring him innocent or just, who has perfectly kept the law:—a gracious or evangelical justification, in pardoning the guilty.

It is not possible that God should justify *any man* on legal principles; for the law cannot justify any who have transgressed it; and *all mankind* have broken the law of God. "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rom. iii. 20, 23. It necessarily follows, therefore, that no man can be justified before God, but by a free pardon of all his sins. This is done in one moment. That all our past sins are forgiven us at the same instant of time, we may learn from the Scriptures generally, and especially from the context: "Thy *sins* are forgiven."—"Her *sins*, which *are many*, are forgiven." Indeed, it is both absurd and unscriptural to suppose that justification is a progressive, and not an instantaneous work. The moment previous to that of our justification, we are held accountable for, and exposed to, the punishment which is due to all the sins of our past lives, whether of our actions, words, or thoughts. But at the moment of justification, all the guilt which we have contracted during life, and all our liability to punishment on the account of sin, are taken away; and we are as fully justified in the sight of God, as though we had never transgressed against him, or violated his holy law. We are then taken fully into the divine favor, and looked upon with entire approbation. Not that we are justified from all our future, as well as our past sins, as some have absurdly taught. The apostle says, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." Rom. iii. 25. And again,

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"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Heb. x. 26. So far, therefore, are we from having the forgiveness of all our future sins at the moment of our justification, that we are thereby laid under stronger obligation to avoid them; and that a more severe condemnation will be the consequence of committing them. The doctrine of evangelical justification, therefore, instead of giving the least toleration to sinful indulgence, is the only effectual antidote by which it can be destroyed; especially when connected with that spiritual renovation by which this justification is always accompanied.

2. *Renovation is a renewal or restoration to a former or primitive state.*

It is used in this discourse for that work of divine grace whereby the Holy Spirit operates upon the moral powers of our nature, and transforms them into the image of God: and is designed to include what is generally denominated *regeneration*, or the new birth, and sanctification. This renovation commences in the soul at the moment of our justification, and is completed in the entire sanctification of our nature. Renovation, therefore, is not an instantaneous, but a progressive work. True, the commencement of this work is as instantaneous as that of justification. We are justified as ungodly—and are unholy and unregenerate sinners up to the moment of our justification. But, at that moment, the Spirit of God, by an inward, inexplicable energy, measurably transforms our moral powers into the divine image, and imparts a principle of divine love to the soul, by which it is inclined to holiness and virtue. By this instantaneous change, the power of sin is broken, and the power of righteousness so implanted in our nature, that we are thenceforward enabled to love God, and keep his commandments; and to love our fellow creatures, even every human being; and discharge the duties of justice and benevolence to those with whom we have intercourse. But, although the power of sin is thus broken by this instantaneous change, ordinarily, the work of renovation is not completed at that moment. This remains to be effected by the subsequent operations of the Divine Spirit upon our hearts. From the first moment of this change, the work of sanctification is carried on in the heart of a faithful child of God: and generally we grow up into Christ from day to day, by imperceptible degrees; like the plant which is continually growing, as we may be assured, if we only notice it at suitable times; and yet we may look at it ever so intensely, without being able to discover it at the moment. It is because of this gradual work of divine grace in the soul, that Christians are said to "grow in grace;—to grow up into Christ." And because there is a correspondence between the growth of vegetation and that of human beings, this spiritual growth is compared to both: and in respect to this latter comparison, we are said to "come

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unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Agreeably to this figure, newly converted persons, and such as have made but little progress in the divine life, are compared to *babes* or infants, and are exhorted to desire "the sincere or *pure* milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." Those, therefore, who, being born of God, are faithful to the grace given them, grow up into Christ in an imperceptible manner, until at length they obtain that degree of spiritual strength by which they are enabled to bear a full discovery of the remaining corruptions of their nature. This discovery is made to us by the increasing light of the Holy Spirit, when, and as we are able to bear it; that we may abhor those corruptions, and seek that greater measure of sanctifying energy by which alone they can be destroyed. Our heavenly Father is infinitely too wise and good to make these discoveries to his children faster than they receive strength to bear them; or to withhold that spiritual light by which these discoveries may be made, when they are fully able to receive it. Therefore, when this light is reflected upon the soul, and through its influence we discover the remaining corruptions of our nature, abhor them, desire to be delivered from them, and seek and obtain this sanctifying grace; our moral nature is completely renovated: so that we may love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves. Still, however, we inhabit houses of clay; or, in other words, the soul si connected with a disordered body, in consequence of which we are encompassed with innumerable evils, and are subject to innumerable defects. For, under these circumstances, the soul may be compared to a skilful musician who is compelled to perform upon an old crazy instrument, which is altogether out of tune; he performs his operations well, but the instrument upon which he operates being disordered, his performance is necessarily very defective. It should be also well understood, that whatever attainments we may have arrived at in our spiritual course, we cannot live upon the grace already received, as the rich worldling lives upon his estate; seeing that we receive no more grace, from moment to moment, than is necessary for present purposes; and, therefore, the most holy person must continually receive grace from God sufficient to keep him in his present state; and if he does not, he will decline in religion.

Further—The soul of man being a spirit, is capable of a continual increase of moral as well as of intellectual power; and therefore we are as capable of growing in grace, after our nature is entirely sanctified, as before. This being the case, the Christian, provided he be faithful to the grace given, will grow in grace to the end of his earthly course; yea, and to all eternity. For as an eternal progression in intellectual and moral perfection cannot constitute *absolute* or *infinite perfection*, there is nothing, except it be the divine Being, that can prevent the eternal enlargement of the intellectual and moral capaci-

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ties of *men* and *angels*. And surely, no man can reasonably suppose that a Being of infinite benevolence would exert his omnipotence to check the increasing perfections of his intelligent creatures; especially as his own glory and their happiness will increase in the same proportion as they advance in the scale of moral and intellectual excellence. We will now notice,—

II. THE CONDITION ON WHICH THIS SALVATION IS SUSPENDED.

1. *This condition is our faith.*

That faith is the condition on which this salvation is suspended, is sufficiently manifest from the language of our text; and this is abundantly confirmed by the testimonies of the inspired writers of the New Testament, in almost every part of their writings. Thus our Lord says to this woman, "Thy *faith* hath saved thee." From which it appears that faith was a cause of her salvation in some sense; and as it could not have been either the meritorious or efficient cause of it, there is no other sense in which I can possibly understand her salvation to have depended on her faith, except it be the instrument through which it was communicated, or the condition on which its reception was suspended.

That faith is not the meritorious cause of our salvation, either in whole or in part, must be obvious to every one who admits the definition of evangelical justification, given in this discourse; and the proofs and arguments adduced to show the necessity of this method of justification, equally show that there can be no merit in our faith. This is declared by the apostle Paul, Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." And again, Rom. iii. 27. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay; but by the law of faith." So that there is no merit in our faith. The infinitely meritorious sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only meritorious cause of our salvation. God hath "made him to be sin, that is, a sin offering, for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. "For there is no other name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we *must* be saved." Acts iv. 12. Nothing can be more certain, therefore, than that faith is not the meritorious cause of our salvation. Neither is faith the efficient cause of salvation. True, one of our poets teaches us to sing,—

> "'Tis faith that changes all the heart,
> 'Tis faith that works by love."

But he could not design to teach us that faith does this in an efficient, but merely in a conditional manner. To suppose that faith can act efficiently in renovating the heart, is to suppose it to be an agent, instead of its being the exercise of our agency. And to suppose that

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our minds act efficiently in our salvation, is to suppose that an unholy nature can regenerate itself; that is, that an unholy cause can produce a holy effect; which is perfectly absurd, and contrary to all just principles of reasoning. The Scriptures assure us that the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of man's salvation. For which reason we are said to be "born of the Spirit;" to be "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." Therefore, the Scriptures teach us to ascribe all our salvation to God, who is the only efficient Operator in this great work. Again, in strict propriety, faith cannot be said to be an instrument of our salvation; because it is not either a subordinate agent employed by the Divine Being, as a means of promoting this salvation, or an engine in his hands which he uses to produce this effect. Therefore, to call faith the instrumental cause of our salvation, is to confound the influence which the gospel of Christ, the ministers of the gospel, and the institutions of religion, have upon the human mind, with the exercise of our own agency, as excited through the instrumentality which God employs for this purpose. Therefore, faith is not the instrumental any more than the meritorious or efficient cause of the salvation of man. Now, as it is not through the merit, efficiency, or instrumentality of our faith, that we are saved; in what other sense can faith be said to save us, except as the one condition on which our salvation is suspended? By a condition we mean something to be performed by us, on which our reception of the desired benefit is so suspended that we cannot receive it without this be done, and will certainly receive it as soon as this is performed. Therefore, we do not mean by a condition an equivalent, either in whole or in part, for this salvation, as some pretend to understand us:—and that this view of the subject is distinctly opposed in this discourse, must be obvious to every one who has attended to the preceding remarks. To illustrate this: Should an estate, valued at one hundred millions of dollars, be offered me on condition of the payment of one cent,—though the cent would be no equivalent for the proffered benefit, yet the payment of that cent would be necessary to my obtaining possession of the estate; and if I refused to pay it, the property could never become mine. However, this comparison does not hold good in all its parts, as one cent would bear some proportion to one hundred millions of dollars; whereas, our faith is no part of an equivalent for the salvation of which it is the condition. The following comparison, therefore, will better illustrate this subject. A beggar presents himself at your door, in a starving condition; and you kindly offer to supply his wants, on condition of his coming into your house and receiving your bounty: he pleads his inability to enter your door, and you offer to carry him in, provided that he will consent that you should do so; if he complies, your veracity is pledged to assist him into the house, and afford him relief; but if he refuses this compliance, he

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must perish for want of the food which you freely offered to bestow upon him. Here, then, is a condition, on which the reception of a desired benefit is so suspended, that it is fully secured to him that desires it on its performance; and not otherwise; and surely, no one will pretend that the condition on which this benefit is suspended, in any wise impairs the freeness of the gift. That faith is such a condition of the salvation of a sinner, will fully appear from the following scripture testimonies. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John iii. 18. "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 39. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 12, 13. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

Faith, therefore, is the *one only condition*, on which this salvation is suspended. But,—

2. *It is not every thing which is called faith, that constitutes that faith, on the condition of which the soul is saved.*

The faith by which we are justified and renovated is founded on an evangelical repentance. Before a sinner can believe to the saving of his soul, he must be convinced of his lost and helpless condition by nature. He must see that sin is the worst of evils, not only because it exposes him to punishment, but because it is opposed to the perfections of the Divine Being; and a transgression of his infinitely pure and perfect law. He must feel a deep and humiliating sense of the depravity of his own heart, and of the diabolical principles which govern in his own nature. And being thus convinced of sin, he must abhor it; and abhor himself, on account of his sinful nature, and the evils of his life. This abhorrence of sin must be accompanied by a sincere contrition of heart, for having offended God, the good as well as just Being, his heavenly Father, his Benefactor, his Redeemer and Saviour; and also, by a renunciation of all his former sinful practices and the indulgence of his sinful desires and thoughts And, finally, he must despair of salvation, except through the divine mercy and the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. To effect this repentance, the law of God must be brought home to his conscience and his heart, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. To which agency he must yield, that it may work this repentance within him. This is according to the Apostle's teaching. "I was alive without the law once," says he, "but when

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the commandment came" home to my conscience, "sin revived, and I died;" I then discovered myself to be a lost and undone sinner; whereas before, I thought myself to be a righteous man. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good; that is, the law is infinitely perfect and excellent in itself; it is infinitely just in all its requirements of man, and in the punishment with which it threatens him for his transgressions; and it is infinitely good, or perfectly adapted to the end for which it is designed, viz. to be a rule of life to all intelligent moral beings; and promotive of the happiness of all such as are conformed to its principles and requirements. "The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." I am a perfect contrast, in my nature and practices, to this infinitely pure and perfect law; neither am I able to change this nature; but, on the contrary, the more I strive to do this, the more fully I become sensible of my own impotence. "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body;" the whole assemblage of constitutional evil, which is spiritual "death!" Rom. vii. 9 : 12 : 14 : 23 : 24.

When the sinner is brought to such a despairing view of himself, the gospel of Christ presents him with a perfect antidote to this, his spiritual malady; as the Apostle adds in the words immediately following the last quotation: viz. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is, thank God, deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord, for such a despairing sinner; from such a dreadful death; and nothing is now necessary to prepare him for this deliverance, which he feels to be absolutely necessary to his peace, but faith in that Redeemer and Saviour, which this gospel presents before him. To such a sinner, the language of the gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvi. 31. Saving faith, therefore, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes an acknowledgment of his supreme divinity; his incarnation; his miraculous conception and birth; his immaculacy; his sacrificial death as an atoning victim for the sins of man, and his mediatorial offices. The sinner must see in the Saviour a suitableness to his necessities as a sinner. He must not only believe that Christ died for all men in general, but that he died for *him* in particular. That he is just such a Saviour as is suited to *himself* as a lost and ruined sinner. That he is infinitely able, willing, and ready, to save *him*, and to save him *now*. This view of Christ, and of *himself*, must be accompanied by the full and unreserved consent of his own heart, to receive him, in his true character, and in all his offices; as a prophet or teacher, to instruct his ignorance; a priest, to apply the

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merit of his own sacrifice, to his conscience, and intercede for him in the court of heaven; and as a king, to rule over him, to give him laws for the government of his conduct, to govern him, and especially, to rule in his heart; and as his final Judge, to fix his everlasting destiny, according to the character which he may sustain, and the course of conduct which he may pursue in life. In short, this saving faith is such a sure trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, as leads the sinner to abandon himself to him without any reserve, to confide his all to his care, for time and eternity.

3. *Respecting the agency of man, and the influence of divine grace in the act of faith, theologians have run into opposite extremes.*

That we are dependent upon the grace of God in this act of faith not only for the object of this faith, the Lord Jesus Christ; and the medium through which this object is presented to our minds, the word of God; but also for that divine illumination which enables us to apprehend the Lord Jesus Christ, through this word; and for the power which is exerted by the mind in the act of faith, are propositions, so self-evident to my mind, that I wonder how any man, who acknowledges the depravity of human nature, can hesitate to admit them. Faith, therefore, is the gift of God, by that immediate illumination, and gracious energy, which are afforded to the penitent sinner, enabling him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a heart unto righteousness. But, nevertheless, faith is the free and unnecessitated act of the sinner's own mind, through the aid which this grace affords him. This is evident from the language of our text, and, indeed, from the general tenor of the Scriptures, wherever they speak of this subject. Take the following examples, in proof of the above assertions. "*Thy* faith hath saved thee."—"O woman, great is *thy* faith." Matt. xv. 28. "I say unto you, I have not found *so great* faith, no, not *in Israel*." Luke vii. 9. "According to *your* faith, be it unto you." Matt. ix. 29. Surely, nothing can be more inconsistent with the language employed by our Lord, in the above quotations, than the supposition that we are dependent upon an immediate *irresistible* act of grace, to enable us to believe in Christ to the salvation of our souls. If a penitent sinner cannot believe to the saving of his soul, but by an act of irresistible grace impelling him thereto, then faith is no more *his act*, than the motion of the axe in the hands of the woodsman, in felling the trees of the forest, is its act: and, therefore, if this supposition be true, it would be as proper to say that it was the axe that cut down the forest, as that it is the *faith of the sinner*, by which he is saved. Every body knows that it is the act of the woodsman by which the trees of the forest are cut down: and so, also, if it be true, that, in the act of faith, the sinner is a mere passive instrument in the hands of God, as he must be on the above supposition, every body might know, that God is

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the only agent in the act of faith, by which the sinner is saved. Neither will it avail us any thing, to say that the sinner is conscious of the act, and willing that it should be performed; inasmuch as, on the above supposition, this consciousness and volition are as much the result of the divine irresistible agency, as the act of faith itself. The only difference, therefore, on this supposition, is, that the axe is an unconscious instrument in the hands of the woodsman, while the sinner, being as passive an instrument in the hands of God, is caused by this superior Agent, by an equally irresistible impulse, to know and to approve the act which is performed with it. No being is an agent who has not liberty to act. And liberty to perform an action, equally supposes the power of leaving that action unperformed; which the sinner cannot do, provided he is impelled to its performance by the irresistible agency of the Divine Being. We conclude, therefore, on the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, as contained in the forecited Scriptures, that this notion concerning the irresistibility of divine grace in the act of faith by which the sinner is saved, is as unfounded, as it appears to us to be absurd and unreasonable. The faith, therefore, on which our salvation is suspended, though it depends upon the aid of divine grace, afforded to the penitent sinner, is his own free and unnecessitated act; and, as such, it is made, in the economy of grace, the *one only condition* of our salvation. He that thus believes, as we have seen, is saved; that is, his sins are all forgiven him, for Christ's sake; and he is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness; and he is, also, an adopted child and heir of God. Being thus saved, it is of great importance to him, that he should obtain a satisfactory assurance that he is introduced into this state—Which leads us to notice,—

III. THE EVIDENCE ON WHICH THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST IS ASSURED THAT HE IS A SUBJECT OF THIS SALVATION.

When our Lord had forgiven the sins of this woman, he gave her an assurance of forgiveness, and inspired her with his peace. "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace;" was the language in which this assurance was communicated to her. In like manner, he gives an assurance now, to those who are the subjects of this saving change.

1. *The first evidence afforded to the subject of this grace, is that sensible change which immediately passes upon his mind, at the moment when this work is effected.*

From being overwhelmed with conscious guilt and wretchedness, and sunk in self-despair, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, "sudden as the spark from the smitten steel," or the lightning from the electrified cloud, his guilt, his wretchedness, his despair have

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departed, and a sweet and indescribable peace springs up in his soul. Such is the instantaneousness and the nature of this change. And yet, it is asserted by some that we can have no knowledge of its existence. But, can a man be removed, in an instant, from a dark and loathsome dungeon, into the open air, during a clear sky, at mid-day; and that while his senses are all awake, and his reason enthroned in his mind; and not know it? Or, can he pass from a state of severe bodily pain, into a state of perfect ease, without being sensible of the change which has taken place in himself? Or, still further, can a person who is laboring under great mental distress, pass immediately into a state of entire composure and satisfaction of mind, and know nothing of the difference between his former and his present feelings? Certainly he cannot. Then, neither is it possible for a person who has experienced this great change, to remain ignorant of it. True, God does not deal with all the subjects of this change, precisely in the same manner. Some are led on by such gentle means, and the work of grace is effected by such an imperceptible progress, that they do not know the precise moment, when this change does pass upon them. They know, indeed, that they have felt themselves to be sinners, that they have sought the Lord with penitent desire, that they have felt their need of a Saviour, and that they have finally obtained this peace, in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ; but they cannot determine, the precise moment, in which they were made partakers of this grace. Others there are, who are enabled to determine, with perfect exactness, the time and the place, when and where this change was experienced; and yet, though they know that a great change has taken place in their feelings, they are, for a time, utterly unable to determine the character of this change. To illustrate this point, suppose my watch were taken to pieces, and its various parts, in their separate state, put into my hands. I should certainly know that I had something. I could examine the pieces, and determine their various sizes and shapes, and I could count them and tell their number. But when I had done all this, from my want of skill in this mechanic art, I should not know whether I had all the parts of my watch or not. If, to satisfy myself, I should apply to a person professing to be acquainted with this art, and, after informing him that I had so many parts, and describing their various sizes and conformation, should obtain from him an assurance that I had all the parts of my watch; my doubts would then be removed, exactly in proportion to the confidence I had in the correctness of my own description, and in the competency of the other to determine the matter, and in his veracity in declaring what he knew. But if I should present him with the pieces, and he should proceed to put them together in my presence, and set the watch to running, and I should find it to keep good time; I should

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then know that I had all that was necessary to complete the watch In like manner should a person who has experienced this change, but who remains in doubt concerning its character, relate his experience to some one professing to be skilled in the nature of Christian experience, and receive an assurance from him, that the change through which he has passed was a change from nature to grace; his doubts would be removed, exactly in proportion to his confidence in the accuracy with which he had described the circumstances of his own change, and in the veracity and competency of the other, in pronouncing upon it. But he might still doubt, because he might think, that his own relation had been defective, or that the other was defective in his knowledge of the subject, or devoid of that strict veracity which would be necessary to a faithful decision. Something more than this, therefore, is necessary, to give entire satisfaction to one that has experienced this change, that his sins are forgiven, and that he is born of God.

2. *The second evidence is derived from the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit, the great Agent in this work.*

That the Spirit of God can give a direct assurance to the mind of man, that his sins are forgiven him, and that he is born of God, cannot be reasonably doubted by any man, who professes to believe in the divinity of the Holy Ghost. That this assurance is important to us, is felt by every one who is deeply sensible of the value of his own soul; and that the testimony of this Spirit is necessary to the assurance, the preceding observations are calculated to show. The direct testimony of the Spirit of God, therefore, is necessary to the peace and satisfaction of the Christian; and it is perfectly possible that this direct testimony should be given. What reason, then, can be assigned, why it should not be expected? That the Spirit of God does thus testify to the mind of a Christian, is positively asserted by the Apostle Paul, under the plenary inspiration of God; Rom. viii. 15, 16. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." For, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Again, Gal. iv. 6. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Nothing can be more express than these declarations of the Apostle; therefore, the Spirit of God does bear its testimony within us, to the existence and character of this change. This testimony, as Mr. Wesley expresses it, is "an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me. That all my sins are blotted out, and that I, even I, am reconciled to God." This testimony is given, not to the imagination,

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not to the passions, but directly, and explicitly, to the *understanding*. And, therefore, by this testimony, we know that we are the children of God. But it should be distinctly recollected, that this testimony does not relate to what we shall be hereafter, but to what we are now. It does not assure us of our eternal salvation, as some have absurdly taught, but of our present relation to God: that we are approved in his sight, that we are his children; consequently, that we are his heirs; as the Apostle Paul declares,—"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

But is it not possible that a person should be deceived in this matter? Most assuredly it is possible for an enthusiast to deceive himself, by imagining that he is in the favor of God, when he is not; and this deception may proceed from his taking the working of his own imagination for the testimony of the Divine Spirit. But this is no proof that there is any want of clearness or certainty in the testimony of the Holy Spirit itself; neither is it proof that the Spirit of God does not testify to the mind of a genuine child of God. Where the Spirit of God does directly testify to the human mind, there is certainty; and all doubting must, during the time that this testimony is given, cease. But the direct testimony of the Spirit may be withdrawn from the mind, owing to our unfaithfulness; or it may be obscured to us by temptation, or by bodily or mental affliction; and then we may be involved in doubt and uncertainty concerning our spiritual state. The testimony of the Holy Spirit will always be consistent with itself; and we not only have its testimony in our minds, but also in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, that we may not deceive ourselves, by mistaking our own, or some other spirit, for the Spirit of God, we must have recourse to the Holy Scriptures. Here we are taught, that *this* testimony of the Spirit is always accompanied by its fruits. Besides, the Apostle Paul teaches us, that the *Spirit of God* testifies with *our spirits*, that is, that the Spirit of God and our own consciences are joint witnesses to this truth. Therefore,—

3. *The third evidence we have of this change, is by the testimony of our own consciences.*

Now that a man's own conscience may be a capable witness, it must be made acquainted with the facts in the case; and these facts it must discover in its own heart. To enable his conscience to decide in his favor, the testimony of the Scriptures must accord with his own experience. His penitence, his faith, and the change which has taken place within him, therefore, must all agree with the rule laid down in the Scriptures, before an enlightened conscience can give its testimony in his favor. Besides, as we have already seen, where the Spirit of God does bear witness in our favor, it accompanies its testimony by its own fruits. These fruits are "love, joy,

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peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." If, therefore, these graces, or fruits of the Spirit, exist and operate in our hearts, their existence assures our conscience of the change through which we have passed; and enables it to give an approving testimony within us. But where these are wanting, this testimony cannot be given. For "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ," that is, the temper and disposition which characterized him, "he is none of his." Rom. viii. 9. And, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14. Unless, therefore, the love of God and our neighbor, with their attendant graces, rule in our hearts, we deceive ourselves, if we imagine that we are the children of God; but if these exist, and reign within us, they assure our conscience before God, that we are in his favor, and belong to his family.

4. *The fourth and last evidence of this change is found in a life of conformity to the rule of the Scriptures.*

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he," that is, Christ, "is righteous." "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." 1 John iii. 7. 10. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. vii. 21. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John xv. 14. Obedience to the will of God, therefore, is inseparable from a gracious state. Where the fruits of the Spirit abound in the heart, they will be seen in the life; in an attention to the duties of piety towards God, and of justice and benevolence towards men. The faithful discharge of all these duties, therefore, is a proof of inward piety and benevolence. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them." Matt. vii. 18. 20. But let it be remembered that a partial attention to the duties of piety and morality, is no proof of a pious and benevolent heart; but a life of entire conformity to the rule of the Scriptures. "For he that breaks the law in one point is guilty of all." James ii. 10. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." And "Whosoever is born of God doth not *commit* sin." 1 John iii. 8, 9. And Christ says, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke vi. 46. Therefore we have no right to call ourselves Christians, if we live in the known, wilful and habitual neglect of any of the duties enjoined upon us in the word of God; or in the commission of any sin, therein forbidden. There is, however, a vast difference between a consciousness that we live in the known transgression of the divine law, or of a wilful neglect of any of the duties of piety or morality; and a consciousness that

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we come short of the measure of piety and morality, enjoined upon us by the authority of God's word. The true Christian, as such, can have no consciousness of the former; of the latter he becomes increasingly conscious, as the light of divine grace is increased within him, and his desires increase after an entire conformity to the divine will and image. Having laid this important subject before the reader, in this imperfect manner, the desire and prayer of the writer is, that God may make him a partaker of the fulness of this salvation, enable him to live and act under its influence through life, and finally receive him into his presence and glory, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

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SERMON XVII.

BY REV. ELIJAH HEDDING, D. D.,
BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SELF-GOVERNMENT.

PROVERBS, XVI. 32.

HE THAT IS SLOW TO ANGER IS BETTER THAN THE MIGHTY; AND HE THAT RULETH HIS SPIRIT, THAN HE THAT TAKETH A CITY.

WHEN we contemplate the human character, we observe in it surprising contrasts—of greatness and littleness—of wisdom and folly—of strength and weakness. We see these inconsistencies in men of all ranks, and in all conditions of life; we have read of them in the history of all ages and of all countries; in that of the most learned and polished nations of the earth, as well as in that of the savage and barbarian.

At one time we behold the human being arising in all the strength of intellect, exploring the wonders of creation in heaven above and on earth beneath; ascertaining the laws by which the Almighty governs the universe; and discovering the means by which man can best avail himself of the blessings of Providence.

Again, he comes forward as the friend and benefactor of his race, employing all the powers of his mind and body in affording relief to afflicted humanity; shedding abroad the most endearing kindness upon the circle of his friends, and even upon his enemies; inventing arts, and contriving plans of extensive usefulness; laboring to promote the happiness of his country, or submitting to hardships, and encountering dangers to defend its rights and secure its privileges.

At another time we see man forgetting his highest obligations; losing sight of his best interests; diverting his mind from those subjects which have the strongest claim on his attention; detaching his affections from those objects which are most worthy of his regard; submitting the noble powers of his rational nature to the tyranny of

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lawless passion, or the despotism of sordid appetite ; acting as though he were made only for himself, or as though he were sent into the world only to torment and ruin his fellow beings. Finally, as if the grand business of his life were to destroy himself, he sinks himself as far beneath the brutes that perish, as the God of nature had placed him above them.

If we had not been favored with light from heaven, we might have perplexed ourselves with perpetual doubts respecting these strange inconsistencies ; we could not have determined, with any certainty, respecting our origin, nature, or end ; hence we might have received the sentiment of the poet respecting man, and each one have been

"In doubt to deem himself a god or beast."

But now, as *the darkness is past, and the true light shineth*, we are enabled to attribute each of these effects to its proper cause ; "God hath made man upright ; but he hath sought out many inventions." All the noble properties of his nature are to be ascribed to his original creation : "God created man in his own image ;" and all the virtues which now appear in him, are to be imputed to the gracious influence of that good Being who made him. But to account for the littleness, meanness, weakness, and wretchedness, which now so frequently appear in our race, and shock our sensibilities, we are referred both to the original transgression and to the actual sins of men.

The truth is, man, by breaking away from under the moral government of God, has made himself a prey to the spiritual tyrants who rule him and drive him to destruction. But a way is opened in the gospel, in which he may be delivered from those who rule over him, brought back to his God, and prepared by grace to govern himself ;—and to this he is encouraged in the text.

Self-government is the subject.

And let us inquire,—

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN RULING OUR SPIRITS?

II. WHAT ADVANTAGES ARE TO RESULT FROM THUS GOVERNING OURSELVES?

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN RULING OUR SPIRITS?

The man who rules his own spirit has his mind withdrawn from sinful and improper subjects. His meditations, studies, and imaginations are directed to those things which are proper for a being possessing the powers by which God has distinguished him—are consistent with his own highest interests, and suitable to the relations he holds with all othe beings in the universe. His affections are detached from all forbi.den objects, and united to all which it is proper

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for such a being to regard, in a degree suited to their natures, the obligations he is under to them, and the condition in which Providence has placed him. His passions and propensities are in proper subjection to reason, and to the rules of duty made known to him in the revealed will of God. His words and actions are governed by the same principles, and are employed to promote the grand objects for which the Creator sent him into the world, and endowed him with the faculties which so wonderfully distinguish him from, and place him above, all other kinds of creatures on earth.

Indeed, this implies that religious principles are fully established in the heart, carrying their salutary and benign effects through all its powers, and all the conduct of life. In a word, this involves obedience to all the divine commands. Thus spake our blessed Lord: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,—*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" This is being a Christian *indeed*, faithful in every relation; and leading to observe that other precept of our Saviour—"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

But does the character of man, in its present state, exhibit a prevailing inclination to these pious affections, and to these righteous and benevolent practices? No; this inclination is far from him. An inspired apostle, considering human beings in their natural state, *unsanctified* and *unrestrained* by the gracious influence of Heaven, manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord, has solemnly declared—"*There is none righteous, no, not one.*"

How, *then, are* men to govern themselves? They must *know themselves*:—he that would rule himself must be acquainted with his own disposition and character. He must see the corruptions of that heart which is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;* that pride, selfishness, stubbornness, and excessive love of sensual objects; that *carnal mind* which *is enmity against God*,—all of which are opposed to the commands of reason and religion. He must perceive the criminal nature of past offences, and be humble before God, in sincere repentance for his inward depravity and outward transgressions. He must be apprized of his own weakness; that if he attempt to rule his own spirit by his own power, independently of help from above, his *goodness will be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it will go away.* It was when the Jews had forgotten Jehovah, "*and trusted in falsehood,*" that he said to them—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Hence so many, in our day, who have purposed to do well, have failed in the attempt

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It is necessary that he who would rule himself should realize the truth, not only of our Saviour's words, "without me ye can do nothing," but also, "that when we were yet without strength" to rule ourselves, "in due time *Christ died for the ungodly;*—and that he should have full confidence in the object of an apostle's faith, who said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

It is thus we attain a change of moral nature, the establishment of a principle of holiness in the heart, the forgiveness of sin, power from above to rule our own spirits, to conquer our spiritual adversaries, and to honor God in the world. It is allowed, indeed, that restraining grace operates on the minds of those who have never been the subjects of a real change of heart. Under this influence many maintain a government over themselves, so far as to render them moral, benevolent, and, in many respects, *useful;* but it cannot be proved by the Scriptures, that any one is *completely* in possession of this *self-government* till *he is born of the Spirit.* Then *he is in Christ,* and becomes *a new creature:—the Son has made him free,* and *he is free indeed.*

Fallen man will never rightly rule himself till he comes under the government of the Redeemer.

Till then he is *alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart. He is dead in trespasses and sins; wherein he walketh according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* He is in the snare of the devil, taken captive by him at his will. "The strong man armed keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace."

But God has been gracious unto man, and said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a RANSOM." "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." "He tasted death for every man," that every man might have the opportunity of tasting salvation through his blood.

By his death he conquered the enemies of God and man, and by his resurrection and ascension "he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

The spirit of prophecy had foretold that the Messiah would be a King, a Prince, a Ruler;—that through him the God of heaven should set up a kingdom that should stand for ever. In due time the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed the good news that Messiah, the Prince, had appeared—that he had made atonement and intercession for the transgressors—that the penitent, believing, guilty soul, might be pardoned.

It first proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven, that is, of the Messiah, was at hand,—and then that it was established. It proclaimed liberty to the captives, and invited the slaves of sin and Satan to come

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and enjoy the liberty and blessings of the kingdom of God. It called them to come into a kingdom whose citizens possessed righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The same proclamation is now sounding through the world. And wherever men will submit to the terms of the gospel, they shall become citizens in Zion; subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah.—They shall be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The word of prophecy had declared, that in this kingdom its subjects should have the law of God written in their hearts. "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." The holy principles of God's moral law are written in the new hearts of his redeemed believing people. "Created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," they have hearts to hate all sorts of sin, and to love their God, and to love their duty in all its branches. This new principle, or new nature,—this grace of God in their hearts,—guards them against evil thoughts, tempers, passions, words, and works; and promotes in them all holy affections, and all the works of piety, justice, and mercy. And it is by this principle alone that man is able rightly to rule his own spirit. This government of one's self is obtained by grace. The grace of God in Christ Jesus is the foundation of it, and without this grace no fallen being will ever govern himself to the acceptance of God who made him. But when this grace is received in the heart by faith, and preserved in a spirit of true obedience, man lives a new life. He can say with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And now, as this redeemed people are taken into Christ's kingdom, adopted into his family, have partaken of his nature, have become children of the King of Zion, and rule themselves as he rules the church;—they are styled "a ROYAL priesthood, a holy *nation*, a peculiar people"—and, it is said, they are "*made* KINGS and priests unto God," and that "they shall REIGN on the earth."

But, though this government of the redeemed soul is obtained by grace, though grace alone can give strength to maintain it, yet the Christian is still to give diligence to "make his calling and election sure," lest he be "entangled again with the yoke of bondage!" And, even now, it is only by a humble sense of his dependence on God, a firm resolution to do his will, a steadfast perseverance in watchfulness and prayer, and a faithful application to all the branches of his duty, that he can "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free."

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II. WHAT ADVANTAGES ARE TO RESULT FROM THUS GOVERNING OURSELVES?

We may answer, as an apostle did with reference to another subject, "much every way." This course confers many blessings on every situation in life, and affords numerous advantages to men in all their concerns and relations.

1. *Great are the personal advantages.*

The individual who maintains this government over himself, is in a state of peace in his own soul: "Being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He is favored with a testimony from heaven that God loves him;—for "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him." He is delivered from those corroding anxieties and tormenting fears respecting the future events of life, to which many are subject, and by which so many are made miserable; for now he puts his trust in God, and rests in an unshaken assurance that God will protect him, and order the changes of his state, so as shall be best suited to his present and future happiness. He is saved also from those sinful gratifications and excesses by which, *otherwise*, soul and body might be prostrated; and is conducted safely through the journey of life, in that manner which will best contribute to his present improvement and comfort, and train him up for the hallowed joys of that place into which nothing impure can enter.

Although the wise counsels of Heaven, which, to enlighten the world by examples of Christian fortitude and patience, have permitted martyrs and other saints to suffer, may also call him to taste the cup of affliction; yet he will find support and comfort in a consciousness of the presence and care of his heavenly Father, and in a firm belief "that all things work together for good to them that love God."

He who rules himself is honored of God. They who walk humbly with God, being in subjection to the Father of their spirits, have a near access to him, and are styled, in the Scriptures, "*kings and priests.*" Neither is it an inconsiderable advantage, that they are honored with the friendship and care of angels, and blessed with the fellowship of good men. As they are happy themselves, they are also a blessing to others; instead of corrupting their fellow creatures by their example, they become the honored instruments, in the divine hand, of shedding abroad the blessings of Heaven on mankind;—for *they are the light of the world.* These, my brethren, these are the faithful servants whom God will accept, bless, and support, in the day of death. These, being delivered from the guilt and dominion of sin, shall not be afraid of the king of terrors;—*the Sun of righteousness* will illumine their path to a happier world; holy angels will bear them to the mansions of rest; and there shall they remain for ever happy with the Lord.

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2. *Great are the advantages of self-government, in the relation between rulers and subjects.*

Under its influence rulers properly estimate the origin and dignity of their authority. So far from presuming that the right to rule others is the effect of chance, or that it is an *inherent right*, or that it is *merely* the gift of the people, independent of a higher power, they consider that they have derived it through the people from God; to whom they must ultimately render their account: "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Realizing the principles of *ministers* of God, they feel the force of their high obligations; and, far from trusting *solely* to human wisdom, which has led so many of the great and mighty men of the earth in the paths of cruelty and oppression, in all their deliberations they consult the will of *him* who has entrusted them with this distinguished service; and to this will they reverently conform. "David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, said, the Rock of Israel spake to me—He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the *fear of God.*"* Such personages (especially in a country like this), not esteeming themselves the masters, but the *fathers* of the people, and *the ministers of God to them for good*, perceive that the great object for which they are elevated above their brethren is, to employ their superior talents, and order their commanding example, in such a manner as shall best secure the happiness of those over whom they bear rule. *Such rulers* will faithfully perform the great duties of their stations, duties connected with the obligations into which they entered under the "*oath of God*," in a manner agreeable to the nature and design of their offices. Such are, indeed, a blessing to their country; "not a terror to good works, but to the evil;" for, *when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.*

When the people are under the influence of the same principle, they obey their rulers, whether acting as *legislators*, holding *executive* offices, or sitting in the place of judgment. A conviction that they rule their own spirits, will inspire a confidence that they will enact equal laws, enforce their due execution, and dispense righteous judgment; hence the people feel safe and happy in committing their dearest earthly interests to the direction of such rulers. Not disposed to unreasonable jealousies, or to magnify errors connected with public measures, which, through the imperfection of human judgment, will sometimes occur; or to imagine errors where they do not exist;—the people have that prohibition of *Heaven* written on their hearts—"Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." And although men who have no rule over their own spirits, are unwilling to

* 2 Samuel, xxiii. 1, 3.

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be ruled by others, saying, with the aspiring Absalom, "O that I were made judge in the land, that every man who hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!"—though such demagogues foment party contentions, raise clamors against their rulers, disturb the peace of society, and in some measure prevent the good effects of salutary laws; the people we have described are willing to be "subject to the higher powers," and yield a cheerful obedience. They regard their rulers, not merely as their brethren in the ordinary walks of life, but as the *representatives* of God, and as the instruments of accomplishing his benevolent designs towards man, as a social being. They *render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.* We may further remark, that, however self-interest, popular opinion, or fear of punishment, may operate on some men, *while under the public eye*, inducing them to appear as the obedient subjects of salutary laws, yet experience has evinced that in general nothing but the influence of *pure* religion can *secure* this object. It operates on the heart, nips evil in the very bud, follows man into the secrecy of retirement, where human law is divested of its authority, and where no human judge can enter. There it inspects every motive, takes cognizance of every action, raises a tribunal in every breast, and pronounces sentence upon secret faults, as well as upon open offences. Whatever despotism may accomplish on an uncultivated, ignorant multitude, in securing obedience to law; yet, amongst an enlightened and free people, under a free and popular government, like this under which Heaven has placed us, we can expect obedience to our salutary laws, only in a degree proportionate to the prevalence of the *heaven-born* principle of *self-government.*

And here, as the principles of law, and the wise designs of government, are carried into effectual operation, *principally*, by righteous decisions in the judicial department; and, as the security of property, reputation, liberty, and even life itself, depends, in so great a degree, on the testimonies given in courts of justice, we cannot too forcibly advert to the vast importance, absolute necessity, and powerful influence of this principle, in all who are admitted as witnesses before the ministers of justice. How can good government be maintained without courts of judicature to enforce the sanctions of law? How can these sanctions be justly distributed, in most cases, without evidence? What confidence can be placed in that evidence, if the witness who gives it has not the fear of God before his eyes? But he who is under the influence of this principle, when he appeals to *him* who searches the heart, for the truth of what he declares, calls on the omniscient God to take notice of what he says; and invokes his curse, and renounces his favor, if what is said, under the solemnity of

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an oath, be false. *He*, I say, is saved from that awful sin of PERJURY; a sin which, in the absence of this principle, has brought so much misery on the life of man, and sent so many souls to eternal perdition. Feeling his solemn bond, he speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and is made an important instrument in establishing justice in the land; in clearing and vindicating the innocent, and restraining or condemning the guilty. On this point I would take the liberty to bring to your recollection the sentiments of that great and good man, in whom we exult as the *father of his country*, and for whose memory every American cherishes the most lively sentiments of gratitude and veneration: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who would labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education, on minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principle."*

There is another benefit to the political interests of a country, arising from the principle of which we have been speaking, which highly deserves our notice. It is the answer of the prayers of a pious people, offered to the Supreme Disposer of events, in behalf of their rulers and their country. However unbelief may operate on the minds of some men, in rendering them insensible to the blessings they receive in answer to prayer, yet that *fervent* prayer is an instrument of procuring *national*, as well as individual blessings, is a truth supported by rational views of a superintending Providence, and plainly declared throughout the Bible. Would Sodom have been spared, had there been ten righteous *praying* people in that city? Then we may believe that a holy people have a peculiar interest in the care of Heaven, and that their prayers are regarded in those dispensations of Providence by which their country is defended from storms of calamity, and by which blessings from above, in rich abundance, are poured upon it. So deeply are they impressed with a sense of the importance and utility of civil government, the responsibility of its officers, the burdens they are called to bear, and the arduous labors they have

* Washington's Address to the People of America.

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to perform; and so solicitous are they that those officers may be enabled faithfully and usefully to discharge the duties of their high functions, that they find a pleasure in complying with that exhortation of the apostle—"Pray for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty."

To a community consisting of rulers and people falling under the description now given, the words of Moses to the chosen tribes are justly applicable:—"Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord! The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee."

3. *Great are the advantages arising from self-government in our religious relations.*

To view the subject particularly as it applies to ministers and hearers. The work of the ministry must be acknowledged by all who believe the truths of revelation, and hope for happiness beyond the grave, to be the most important in which fallible man can possibly engage. It extends, in its effects and consequences, beyond the limits of time, and involves the future happiness or misery of millions, by leading them to felicities or woes which baffle description.

The political decisions of senates may afflict nations with calamity, or deliver them from it; but the good and evil which they administer must terminate with the present life. It is not so with the ministry of the gospel. The effects which result from the faithful or unfaithful labors of those who stand forth as ministers of Christ, to persuade sinners to be reconciled to God, may, indeed, be perceived in every stage of human probation; but they will become more conspicuous, as life draws towards its close; they will remain unextinguished at death, and assume, in eternity, a visible and permanent character.

The man who engages in this solemn work, is accountable to God, not merely for his own soul, but becomes responsible also for the souls of those who have been committed to his care. The sacred writings have guarded his office with the most awful sanctions. Both promises and denunciations conspire to keep alive his hopes and fears, by holding out, in the most pointed language, the rewards or punishments, which await him in a future world. On the one hand, we are assured that "they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever;" while, on the other, we are clearly informed, that unfaithful watchmen shall have the blood of the people required at their hands.

It is only when those servants of the Most High, whom he has commissioned to publish his purposes of mercy to the children of men, are truly under the influence of pure, scriptural religion, that they will accomplish the work for which they have received their

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high commission. Then their tempers and lives, both in public and private, are so far under the government of the wisdom from above, that their office is recommended to all who see or hear them. They live the religion they preach to others, and speak feelingly and persuasively of a religion which has full possession of their own souls. As their hearts are replenished with the very power of godliness, their ordinary conversation partakes of its salutary influence, and is *good for the use of edifying, and ministers grace to the hearers.* However, some who are called preachers, having no rule over their own spirits, may indulge themselves in pride, vanity and ambition, to the grief of the people of God; with these men it is far otherwise; for they have *learned* of him who was *meek and lowly;* they have imbibed his Spirit; hence others "take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus."

In view of this character, a prophet exclaimed, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." Happy are the people favored with such a ministry. The ignorant are instructed, the wanderer is reclaimed, the vicious are reformed, and the hypocrite is convicted. The heart of the sinner is humbled, his sins are pardoned, and his soul is renewed. The weak are strengthened, the afflicted are comforted, the doubting and timid are enlightened, confirmed and emboldened to confess their Lord, and the weary pilgrim is animated, encouraged, and helped forward in the way to Zion. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

Hearers of the gospel, when of the same character, are ready to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Though it must be acknowledged, that the influence of the public servants of Christ has been greatly diminished, and the success of the gospel much hindered by the misrepresentations of some of their hearers, who are impatient under admonitions and reproofs, and become enemies of the cross; yet there are hearers who rule their own spirits, and, yielding to the benign spirit of the gospel, profit by its reproofs, and welcome the admonitions of a faithful minister. However painful it is to reflect on the hindrances cast in the way of the gospel, by false professors of religion; at the same time, it is a subject of great consolation that there are so many, whose sincere piety and righteous example, as they are associated with the gospel, are made powerful instruments of confirming the truth, and spreading the light of it through the world.

The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of charity. And, as far as it governs the hearts of the teachers and hearers of Christianity, it will

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exclude that spirit of bigotry, which has been the source of presumptuous judging, harsh censures, and bitter railings of one sect against another.

It will inspire such a brotherly affection, in all the branches of the true church, that, "by this shall all men know that they are the disciples of Christ, because they have love one to another." And the more the ministers and professors of the religion of Christ are under the government of which we have spoken, the more powerfully, and extensively, the blessings of the gospel will prevail among mankind, till the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, and all nations shall call the Saviour blessed.

4. *Great are the advantages arising from self-government in our social relations.*

Of all the associations formed in this life, that of the conjugal state is the most endearing, and the most important. But the happiness of this relation depends so much on the principle of *self-government*, that, without a proper management, reciprocally, in the parties, of temper and conduct, the happiness contemplated will not be realized; but the connection itself will become an occasion of the most direful ills of life. Still, when those who have formed this important relation, and taken upon themselves these solemn obligations, have learned to rule their own spirits, "to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," they will realize the blessings of a happy union of kindred minds, and will aid each other in ruling their own spirits, and in preparing for higher enjoyments.

Parents, ruling their own spirits, will learn to "rule well their own house, having their children in subjection with all gravity." They will be solicitous not only for the temporal welfare of their children, but, also, for their spiritual and eternal happiness.

Likewise, the rising members of a family thus educated, having learned to rule their own spirits, will study the things of peace and love; will live together as brethren; will reciprocate acts of mutual justice and kindness, and will form such characters, in the estimation of men, that the heads of such a family "shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

The good effects resulting from *self-government*, throughout society in general, are too well known to need a minute illustration. A few observations shall suffice. Among men in the various connections of civilized life, this exhibition of the restraints and influence of correct principles, not only directly promotes social happiness, but, through the influence of good examples, the bold transgressor and even the infidel are in some measure restrained; so that these are far less wicked than they would be if these examples were not before them. Dreadful, indeed, would be the state of our world, were

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there no examples of self-restraint and no influence of correct principles! *Self-government*, in every relation, and under every circumstance, will counteract the passions and appetites most subversive of human happiness. It breaks the ruthless fangs of fraud, and secures from the deadly gripe of its iron jaws the rights of innocence and unsuspecting honesty. It wrests from the rapacious appetite of luxury the superabundant gifts of Providence, and converts them into instruments of mercy to those destitute of daily bread, and into means of promoting religious, moral, and humane institutions. It *tames* that *unruly* member, and chains in eternal silence the tongue of slander, which, otherwise, would be set on fire of hell, and would "set on fire the whole course of nature." It employs that noble gift for the great social purposes for which it was originally bestowed. It dries up the poisoned streams of intemperance, and leads those thirsty souls, who would pine and die under its malignant effects, to those salubrious waters, "which make glad the city of God." It subdues those libidinous propensities, which, in so many instances, where this principle does not operate, drives multitudes of the children of Adam from the society of civilized man, to roam like herds through the dark and filthy places of the earth; not considering *that the dead are there*, and that the *guests*, who have gone before them, *are in the depths of hell*. It fixes a sovereign check on pride, ambition, envy, jealousy, and resentment, which, unrestrained, would burst forth like so many flames from the regions beneath, and spread desolation and death through the earth.

When princes, and senates, and the great among the nations, shall generally yield to the rightful authority of this principle, it will put a stop to the career of WAR, that demon of darkness, which has triumphed over the earth since the days of Nimrod, involving cities in flames, and countries in ruins, depopulating the earth, and drenching it with the blood of the slain of all nations. Yes, brethren, *self-government* shall hush into perpetual silence "the thunder of the captains," the shouts of the conquerors, the wild, distracted cry of the vanquished, and the groans of the wounded and the dying in the field of carnage. *Then*, then, blessed be God, the nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Then all the tribes of men shall raise a shout towards heaven, melodious as when angels sing:—"ALLELUIA: FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. *Let us reflect on the absolute necessity of ruling our spirits.*—Without this, there can be no virtue, no true religion, no good government in the world, and no hope beyond the grave.

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As the beauty of an agreeable object is more clearly perceived by contrasting it with its opposite; as the advantages of a wisely organized and well administered civil government are more readily appreciated by considering them in contrast with the disadvantages of a state of anarchy; so, the necessity of *self-government*, and the blessings attending it, will be more powerfully impressed on our minds, by observing the evils arising from the want of it. And who can look into the history of man, or survey the present state of the world, without being grieved and pained to the heart, by a view of the miseries arising from the absence of self-restraint?—miseries, not only among the poor, the weak, the vulgar, and the ignorant, but among the opulent, the mighty, the polished, and the learned of our race.

For mournful examples of these miseries, we need not go back to the sages, heroes, and statesmen of heathen antiquity; who enlightened the world with their science, made it tremble with their prowess, or chained the nations in obedience to their laws; many of whom ruined themselves or their countries by their private or public excesses. Nor need we direct your attention to those renowned personages of the Hebrew nation, who, in the early part of their lives, were men of God, inculcating the principles of wisdom, and leading their people in the paths of virtue and piety; but who, afterwards failing in vigilance, lost sight of their own principles, and fell into evils, which have transmitted their names, in disgrace, to succeeding generations. Their crimes are recorded in the Scriptures as monuments of human instability, as warnings, to all who come after them, of the dangerous tendency of an ungoverned spirit, and as irresistible arguments of the fidelity of those who wrote the sacred records. Neither is it necessary that I should turn your attention to the present nations of Europe. It may sufficiently humble us to notice the effects of moral disease in our own country. We are happy, indeed, in believing that our forms of government, and the degree of information and virtue among our citizens, will, generally, guard against elevating to places of honor and trust, men of ungoverned passions, seeking their own aggrandizement and not the public good; or if at any time deceived by the *Absaloms of the day*, the exercise of elective rights will speedily reduce such to a private station. But, after acknowledging all the advantages we enjoy, and all the virtue there is among us, there is yet cause of bitter lamentation Alas! fatal instances often occur, even within our favored country, when the hearts of families are wrung with anguish; and our towns are crowded with a population enervated by intemperance. Alas! language would fail should I attempt to speak of the thousands of evils resulting from that curse of our country, the excessive use of ardent spirits. Look yonder:—see that hapless mother and those

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forlorn children, whom nature intended for better days; and whose prospects, perhaps, were once as flattering as those of your families; see them in yonder hovel, shivering with the cold of winter and half consumed by hunger. Where is the husband? Where is the father? Ah! he is spending his time, and wasting his earnings, with a rabble of idlers and spendthrifts in the temple of Bacchus!—Hark! what means that deep, long moan you just heard from a broken hearted parent? Alas! his youthful son, who had twined around his heart—once the joy and hope of his life—has degenerated from the principles of his education, and wandered by degrees, till at length he has fallen a victim to intemperance, or to vicious company, and committed desperate deeds, which have involved him in ruin, and the family in disgrace and sorrow.

To what can we attribute the crime of the duellist, but to a want of rule over his own spirit? Why have statesmen, and counsellors, and heroes, fallen among the dead in those sanguinary conflicts? And why were their antagonists stained with the blood of their brethren, and their country called to weep over the premature loss of those highly distinguished among her sons? Ah! Solomon has given us the answer: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

Here we ought to notice another alarming evil, I mean the frequent occurrence of fraud and flagrant impositions upon the honest and industrious; an evil which is destroying all confidence, loosening the foundation of private rights and property, and shaking the security of social intercourse.

2. *This subject should impress on our minds the obligations we are under, not only to govern ourselves by the rules of religion and virtue; but also to employ the abilities God has given, and the means he has put into our hands, to influence our fellow men in this only safe and truly honorable course.*

Notwithstanding the views we have been called to take of sin and misery in our country, we have reason to be thankful that piety and morality are far from being extinct. We would be grateful to the God of our fathers, that our principles of civil government are so favorable to the promotion of Christian principles and duties. Neither would we be forgetful that the example of a large portion of our rulers is of such a character as to excite respectful attention to these great subjects. Nor would we withhold from the friends of God and man, those congratulations which are merited by the extraordinary exertions recently made in this country to promote the diffusion of truth, and all the leading objects of Christian benevolence.

But much yet remains to be done, and much must be done, or poverty and ruin will overspread our country.

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This wicked world must be reformed and converted to God, or millions of human souls will go down to eternal perdition. The friends of God and man must arise in the strength of their great Redeemer, and exert themselves in this glorious enterprise.

The grand instrument by which this gracious work is to be accomplished is the word of God. That instrument is in your hands, and the principles of it must be diffused through the community; and extended all over the world. Parents must teach their children, masters their servants, school teachers their pupils, and Christians their friends and neighbors, the fear of the Lord. The numerous benevolent and Christian societies, which have for their object the conversion of mankind, must go on in their labors of love, and increase in their benign operations, till the world is evangelized.

The gospel of the kingdom must be preached through all nations, and the Gentiles must be enlightened, and brought to bow to the Prince of peace. Let its messengers rise higher and higher into the spirit of their heavenly mission; let them spread abroad through the tribes of the earth, bearing the glad tidings of salvation, till the "people who sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, shall see a great light," and place themselves under the government of the Son of God. All who love our Lord Jesus Christ must "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and cease not, "until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

The promise has gone forth,—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "The heathen," the infidel, and the skeptic, "may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," but the work of the Messiah will go on, and his conquests and kingdom shall be extended till the King of Zion shall reign over all nations. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

This earth was never made for sin and Satan; they are intruders and rebels on it, they have no right in it,—and Messiah, the Prince, will yet drive them from it. Neither are the men who serve sin and Satan to remain here in rebellion for ever; if they will not submit to the Prince Emmanuel, "they shall be broken with a rod of iron, they shall be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel." They "shall be driven away in their wickedness," and chained down in the bottomless pit with "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan," *who deceived them;* but the earth shall be the Lord's, and he shall be the Governor, and shall have millions of holy and happy people to serve and honor him in it. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that

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dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."

What a happy world shall this then be! When the accuser of the brethren shall be cast down! When sin that brought death into our world shall be driven far from it! The righteous shall then no longer be vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. The abominations which now scourge the world, shall no longer be seen or heard, nor their dreadful consequences torment the inhabitants of the earth. "THE WOLF ALSO SHALL DWELL WITH THE LAMB, AND THE LEOPARD SHALL LIE DOWN WITH THE KID; AND THE CALF AND THE YOUNG LION AND THE FATLING TOGETHER; AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM. AND THE COW AND THE BEAR SHALL FEED; THEIR YOUNG ONES SHALL LIE DOWN TOGETHER; AND THE LION SHALL EAT STRAW LIKE THE OX. AND THE SUCKING CHILD SHALL PLAY ON THE HOLE OF THE ASP, AND THE WEANED CHILD SHALL PUT HIS HAND ON THE COCKATRICE'S DEN. THEY SHALL NOT HURT NOR DESTROY IN ALL MY HOLY MOUNTAIN; FOR THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA."

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SERMON XVIII.

BY REV. ORANGE SCOTT,

PRESIDING ELDER ON SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT, MASS.

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 7.

THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS: AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT.

MATERIALISM has no foundation in Scripture, reason, or sound philosophy. Mind and matter, flesh and spirit, constitute the man. The properties of matter and spirit are totally different. The soul is a substance of one kind, and the body of another; these are united; but death dissolves the union. And then the dust returns to the earth as it was; but the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

The belief of a future state is not of recent origin, nor of limited extent. All nations have united in the opinion, that the human soul is an immaterial substance, wholly distinct from the body. Of this fact, few can be ignorant, who are conversant, to any considerable extent, with the history of man. We can hardly take up the history of any nation, without finding this doctrine as a part of their creed. The savages of different countries have held it with as much confidence as the more enlightened nations. We do not mean that ignorant nations have formed a system, or a science, on this subject; nor that a savage could correctly define or explain his views of it;—

> "Yet, simple nature to his hope has given,
> Behind the cloud-topp'd hill, an humble heaven."

Immateriality, and distinction from the body, are essential parts of all his opinions concerning the soul. When I mention this as the doctrine of all nations, I would not be understood to mean, that there are no exceptions; but that these exceptions are few, and insignificant with respect to this subject.

This doctrine has not only been admitted by the people at large, but by many philosophers: among whom were Pythagoras, Socrates,

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Plato, Cicero, and Plutarch. Many of the oriental sages, also, held the same doctrine. These philosophers, however, held very defective and erroneous opinions concerning the soul. Most of them believed in the transmigration of souls; or, at least, that some souls would successively inhabit different bodies, till they should become purified; and some of them held, that the soul would eventually be united to the divinity. The arguments by which they supported the doctrine of a future state, do not appear to have been, at all times, satisfactory to themselves. Indeed, to the heathen world, a cloud of darkness hung over the whole subject.

Cicero collected many arguments to prove the immortality of the soul; and while he was looking them over, he appears to have been convinced; but when he laid aside the book, and began to reason with himself, his conviction was gone. His arguments gave to the subject a strong probability, but not an absolute certainty. Socrates, one of the wisest and best of all the heathen philosophers, discoursed much upon this doctrine, and appeared to have been firmly persuaded of a future state. Being asked, on the day of his death, by his friend Crito, how he wished to be buried—"As you please," said he, "if you can lay hold of me, and I not escape out of your hand." At the same time, looking upon his friends with a smile, "I can never persuade Crito, that it is Socrates who converses with you, and disposes the several parts of his discourse; for he always imagines, that I am what he is about to see dead in a little while. He confounds me with my carcass, and therefore asks me how I would be interred." At other times, however, he is represented as speaking more doubtfully upon the subject, and as expressing only a hope. "I am in *good hope* that there is something remaining for those that are dead; and, that good men will then fare better than bad ones."

But there were some philosophers who denied a future state of existence altogether. *Aristotle* expressly says, that "death is the most dreadful of all things, because it is the end of our being; and the dead experience neither good nor evil." The stoics seem generally to have held, that the soul survived the body, but only for a limited period: those of ignorant men, for a little time; those of the wise longer.

It is not at all strange that some have denied the doctrine of a future state, and that others have been confused and defective in their sentiments upon this subject; for it is by the gospel, and that alone, that "life and immortality are brought to light." And as the heathen have not the gospel, it is rather strange, that men have so universally believed this doctrine; as it does not appear to have been the effect of philosophy—for these sentiments were antecedent to philosophers; and are rather weakened than strengthened by philosophy. Cicero considers this *general belief* of a future state a *proof* of it; for he

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says, "As we know by nature, that there is a God, so we judge, by the consent of all nations, that souls remain after death, and are immortal."

THE OBJECT OF THE PRESENT DISCOURSE, IS TO PROVE THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, AND A FUTURE STATE OF EXISTENCE.

It is unnecessary to prove to the Christian, that his soul will never die; of this, he is well persuaded already. But though not necessary, it may be useful to lay before him some of those arguments by which this doctrine is supported. Whether the soul shall die with the body, or survive it, is the momentous question now to be considered. The immortality of the soul may be argued,—

I. FROM THE SOUL ITSELF.

We use the term *soul* and *spirit*, in this discourse, as the Scriptures do, indiscriminately. In describing the whole man, St. Paul, in one or two places, uses the Grecian phrase, "soul, body, and spirit," strict accuracy in the use of terms being not always necessary. Some theological writers have undertaken to make a distinction between the soul and spirit; and have considered the spirit the *superior*, and the soul the *inferior* properties of the mind; and to the former, they have ascribed the understanding, memory, will, and conscience; to the latter, the passions and appetites. But then, the soul must be either matter or spirit; and must belong either to the body, or the spirit; so that, properly speaking, man consists of but two parts; one returns to the dust, and the other to God.

1. *The soul is a spiritual substance.* This is evident from the *fact*, that it possesses all the properties of spirit, and none of those that belong to matter—such as intelligence, reflection, and volition. The soul thinks and reasons; compares different objects, and judges of their respective qualities. "That the soul is immaterial," says Mr. Wesley, "is clear from hence, that it is a thinking substance. If it be said, that God can endue matter with a faculty of thinking, we answer, No otherwise than he can endue spirit with solidity and extension; that is, he can change spirit into matter, and he can change matter into spirit. But even the Almighty cannot make it think, while it remains matter; because this implies a contradiction." The soul is, therefore, a simple, uncompounded substance; having neither body nor parts, and without any tendency to dissolution.

Various opinions have been entertained by materialists and heathens, with respect to the nature of the soul. It has been supposed to be the breath;—the blood;—the brain;—a part of God;—a succession of ideas and exercises;—subtle air, composed of atoms, or primitive corpuscles;—a flame, or portion of heavenly light, and many other things. But these, and the like notions, may

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be easily refuted by one or two passages of scripture. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." That is, according to the above theories, converting the breath, the blood, the brain, a part of God,—and so of the rest. St. John tells us, that he saw under the altar, the *souls* of the martyrs—but did he there see the *breath*, the *blood*, the *brain*, and *parts* of God? There is no end to the fancies of men upon this subject.

2. *The soul is capable of endless improvement.* The more knowledge the mind possesses, the better fitted it is for fresh acquisitions in knowledge. It is not so with the brutes; they soon reach the highest improvements of which they are capable—they arive at the utmost zenith of their perfection in a few years—and were they to live many ages longer, they would know no more than they do at present. Were it thus with human beings, we might easily imagine that the soul will decay and perish with the body. But man can never have taken in his full measure of knowledge; he has not time to explore the fields, and fathom the sources of mental improvement, before he is hurried from the stage of action. The all-wise God cannot be supposed to have bestowed upon his creatures useless and superfluous faculties. But such is the fact with respect to man, if he is to perish at death. The mind possesses faculties, that are but imperfectly exercised in this life; but as nothing is made in vain, there must, therefore, be a future state.

Man is endowed with a capacity of knowing, obeying, and adoring his Creator, on whom he is dependent, and to whom he looks up for protection and comfort. The most sagacious of the brutes are not susceptible of these impressions in the least degree. They have, indeed, some faculties in common with us, only less refined; but they are guided chiefly by instinct, and are incapable of science. But man is capable of extending his improvements beyond all bounds. He soars among the stars; surveys the heavenly bodies; investigates the laws of nature; and observes the vast machinery of heaven! How can it enter into the thoughts of man, that the soul, which is capable of such immense perfections, and of making new improvements to all eternity, shall finally perish almost as soon as it is created? Can we believe, that a thinking, intelligent being, that is in a perpetual progress of improvement, and travelling on from one achievement to another, dies, in the commencement of its setting out, after having just looked abroad upon the manifold wisdom and works of its Creator? are such powers and faculties to vanish away ere they put forth?

3. *All men desire immortality, and are averse to annihilation.* The thought of being reduced to nothing is most shocking to the human soul! A miserable existence is preferred to none. There

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are few, if any, so depraved and abandoned, as to wish annihilation. These hopes and desires are not the effect of education, nor are they peculiar to any form of religion; for they are common to all ages and countries. They must, therefore, take their rise from God himself. The sentiments of the poet are in point:

> "Whence springs this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
> Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
> Of falling into nought?—Why shrinks the soul
> Back on herself, and startles at destruction?"
> "'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
> 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
> And intimates eternity to man."

But can we suppose that a Being, infinite in wisdom and goodness, would plant such desires for immortality in his creatures if they were never to be gratified? There is but one conclusion which we can form, consistently with the moral attributes of God, which will completely unravel the mystery of our being animated with unbounded desires, and yet confined to a short and limited duration in the present world—and that is, that this world is not the place of our final destination, but introductory to a more glorious and permanent state of existence.

4. *All human beings are disposed to be religious in some way.* This is so natural to men, that some have chosen to define man, a *religious*, rather than a *rational*, animal. All nations have their gods, to whom they pay adoration and worship; and there is nothing too mean and insignificant for man to worship, rather than to have no god. And all religions are founded in the belief of a future state. It is not to avoid temporal evil, or obtain temporal good, that men are universally religious; but to avoid the miseries, and obtain the blessings of a future state. The victims offered upon the funeral pile and under the car of the idol, all have respect to the future. Take away the belief of the soul's immortality, and let the opinion become universal, that if a man die, he shall *never* live again, and there would no longer be any disposition among men to be religious in *any* way. Not only would the statue of every heathen god totter upon its base, but the foundation being removed, all religion would fall into ruins. *Christians* are, indeed, influenced by other motives than the belief of a future state. But then take away this, and all the rest become weak and inefficient. The *fact*, therefore, that all nations have some form of religion, shows not only that they *desire*, but *believe*, in a future state. And the *fact* that this desire and belief [illegible] universal is, at least, presumptive proof of such a state.

> "Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
> Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest:
> The soul, uneasy, and confined from home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come."

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5. *The powers and faculties of the mind are strong and vigorous, when the body is weak and emaciated.* The properties of the soul are not impaired by sickness and age. I am aware, that the reverse of this has been thought true; and that this supposed fact has been brought by infidels, as an objection to the immortality of the soul. If it be indeed a fact, that the mind decays with the body, this fact would be a formidable objection to the immortality of the soul. But to make this appear, it must be shown, not only that *some* minds *seem* to decay with the body, but that *all* souls DO thus decay and perish. But this cannot be proved. The utmost that can be shown is, that in some instances, the mind *appears* to decay with the body. But it can be shown, on the other hand, not only, that in *some* instances the mind is strong and vigorous in sickness and death, but that in *many* cases there is not the least symptom of mental dissolution, when the body is reduced to its greatest possible weakness. "Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Both good and bad men have found their powers and faculties of mind in their greatest perfection, while their bodies have been reduced to the most extreme weakness. The following is the dying language of the young, noble, accomplished Altamont: "This body is all weakness and pain; but my *soul*, as if strung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, *is full powerful to reason; full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality is, doubtless, immortal.* And as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict what I feel." The same strength of mind was evinced in all the reasonings of this wretched sufferer, during his last sickness. How striking the fact, that when the body is *all weakness* and *pain*, the soul is full powerful to reason, full mighty to suffer! Joseph Addison was capable of the closest reasoning in his last moments. Just before his departure, having sent for a young nobleman of infidel principles, nearly related to him, who requested to know his dying commands, his answer was, "See in what peace a Christian can die!" He spake with difficulty, and soon expired. Here Mr. Addison, just before he expired, when he could only speak with *difficulty*, clearly saw, that of all the arguments against infidelity, the triumphant death of a Christian is the most powerful. The above are not solitary instances of the kind. They are only specimens of the most common occurrences among men. How often, when speech has failed, and the body has lost the power to raise a single limb, has the soul, by some token, evinced, not only that all its powers and faculties remained perfect and unimpaired, but that it was leaving the world in the greatest composure and peace.

It is true, there is a very close and mysterious connection between the body and mind. It is true, also, that they sympathize together; that the sorrows of the mind affect the body; and that the infirmities

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of the body often depress the mind. Such may be the peculiar state of the body, that the mind cannot put forth its energies as it does under different circumstances. The windows of the earthly house may be so darkened by disease or the infirmities of age, that the immortal inhabitant within may not be discovered, or but dimly seen for a time. But shall we therefore argue that it is decaying and vanishing away? As well might we say, that the sun perishes every night, because we do not see its light. As in the latter case, the rays of the sun are obscured by the intervention of the earth, so in the former, the body is sometimes so benumbed by disease and age, that the soul cannot discover itself in its full perfection until it be disembodied, or until the body be differently circumstanced. We conclude, therefore, that notwithstanding the glories of the immortal mind may be eclipsed for a season, while it dwells in this tabernacle of flesh, it nevertheless survives the dissolution of the body, and goes forth to a fairer clime, and to a richer soil, where the fountains of knowledge and happiness are inexhaustible.

II. A FUTURE STATE OF EXISTENCE MAY BE CONCLUDED FROM THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN THIS LIFE.

1. *If there be a God, he is a God of justice; and if he be a God of justice, he will fully reward the virtuous, and punish the vicious—but this he does not do in the present world; and, therefore, there must be a future state.* Here the wicked go on in their wickedness unpunished, while the righteous are frequently chastised and afflicted. But if there be no future state, and men are punished and rewarded according to their works in this life, it would seem that the righteous should be uniformly prospered, and the wicked uniformly punished. This, however, is not the fact. It is said of the wicked, that "they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." "Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish." "For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm." They also "prosper in the world; they increase in riches." The Psalmist in the same place describes the character of those of whom these things are spoken. "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly." "They set their mouth against the heavens." "Therefore, pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment." "*These are the ungodly*"—but of the righteous it is said, "many are their afflictions." They are represented as suffering with Christ, and with his people; and as passing into heaven "through much tribulation." "In the world ye shall have tribulation," was the language of Christ to his disciples. And in view of the sufferings and

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trials which were peculiar to the Christians, St. Paul has said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Such are the scriptural representations of this subject. And on the principle that death is the end of man, how can it be said, with any degree of propriety, that "the way of the transgressor is hard?" and that "sin is an evil thing and bitter?" And if there be no rest remaining to the people of God, and they have no inheritance beyond the grave, well may it be said, that "it is vain to serve God! and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" The Psalmist might in truth say, in view of the present state of the righteous and the wicked, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." But in "the sanctuary of God," he was enlightened. There he perceived that God had allotted unto men a future state of rewards and punishments. The fact, therefore, of the present unequal distribution of rewards and punishments, was no longer "painful" to him.

2. *The natural tendency of virtue is indeed to produce happiness, and that of vice is to produce misery.* If virtue were universally practised, it would produce the greatest possible happiness of which human nature in the present state is susceptible. In like manner, if the prevalence of vice were universal and uncontrolled, the world would be transformed into a den of demons. But though these positions hold true in general, still there are innumerable cases in which the virtuous suffer much, and the vicious little or nothing in this world. The justice of God, and the impartiality of his procedure, would be liable to be impeached, if the *present* were the *only state* of rewards and punishments. We behold the poor, starving wretch, impelled by hunger to break open a house, in order to satisfy his craving appetite, or relieve the wants of a helpless family, dragged to the prison, and from thence to the place of execution; while the very tyrant by whose order the sentence was executed, who has plundered provinces, murdered millions of human beings, wounded the peace of a thousand families, and who has spread destruction and despair wherever he appeared, is regaling himself in the midst of his pleasures, secure from human punishment. Instead of suffering a suitable penalty for each offence, which he could not do in this world, he does not suffer even the penalty due to a single crime, for the ten thousand murders he has committed, and the oceans of blood he has shed. But his praises are chanted by orators and poets; the story of his exploits is engraved in monuments of brass and marble; and his fame is transmitted by historians to future generations. How does the equity of the divine government appear in these providences? Undue punishment is inflicted on the least

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offender, while the greatest wretch is loaded with unmerited enjoyments! A future state of retributions, and that alone, can satisfactorily explain these dark providences. When we consider man as commencing in this world an endless existence, and the divine government as extending to futurity, we find no difficulty in accounting for the present unequal distribution of rewards and punishments. But if we consider man as a creature of time only; if we limit his existence to the present life, a gloomy aspect surrounds us; the moral world is a scene of disorder and confusion. The conduct of the Deity is shrouded in darkness; and there is no resisting the conclusion, either that there is no God, or that virtue and vice are alike to him; either of which is shocking to the human mind! We are therefore led to conclude, that the present state is only a small part of the great plan of God's moral government; the commencement of a series of dispensations to be completed in a future world, where all his glorious attributes will be fully displayed before the eyes of his intelligent creatures.

3. *That the present life is a time of trial, or probation, is admitted on all hands, with very few exceptions.* This doctrine is gathered from the dispensations of Providence, the dictates of reason, and the testimonies of Scripture. And a state of *trial* implies, that there will be a time of review, or examination, when the probationers will be rewarded, or punished, according to their works. But this time cannot come, till the state of trial is *finished*. But it must come either in *this*, or a *future* world. That men cannot be rewarded or punished for their conduct in this world, is certain from the fact, that their probation generally lasts as long as their lives. The threatened penalty, as well as the promised prize, is placed at the end of life. Those, therefore, who *absolutely* fail, must be such as *finally* fail; but no one can *finally fail*, till the *last sands* of his probation are run out; for, until that time, there is an opportunity to return.

If a master allow a servant three days in which to perform certain works, whatever may be the conduct of the servant during that time, he is not properly accountable, and punishable, for the non-performance of those works, till the time allotted him has *expired*. It is equally true, that the present life is a state of probation, and not of retribution; and as a state of trial implies a time of retribution; and as the retribution must *succeed* the probation; and it having been already shown that our probation and lives generally close together; it follows of course, that there is a *future state*; that man has a conscious existence after death; and that the awards of justice are reserved till the final closing up of life, when they will be fully revealed. The *fact*, therefore, that we are here probationers for eternity, is proof in point, that the soul is immortal, and that man is destined to a future state of existence.

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4. *The doctrine, that there is no future state, destroys all proper distinction between* VIRTUE *and* VICE. And, indeed, if this be the case, they have no existence but in *name;* for neither is the one rewarded, nor the other punished. There would be no motives to virtue, nor any checks to vice. Do away a future state, and there is nothing for the vicious to fear, nor for the virtuous to desire. The most efficient motives to holiness are drawn from eternity. In vain do we undertake to reason the sinner out of his sins, by telling him that it is his duty to serve God; that holiness is a good thing in this world; and that sin is a reproach to any people or individual. He loves his sins too well to renounce them, if he has no consequences to fear after death.

I know it has been said, that wicked men suffer, in this world, all their sins deserve; and all that justice requires. But this has never yet been proved; neither can it be proved, to the satisfaction of the serious and candid part of the community. There are but three ways in which the transgressor can suffer in this world: and these are, in his outward circumstances, in his body, and in his soul. There is not another way different from all these, within the reach of thought. It is admitted, that the wicked have more or less affliction in one or more of the above ways, in this world; and that this affliction may be called punishment—that is, *disciplinary* punishment. But disciplinary punishment, however severe, is not the whole punishment due to transgression, but is limited by the mercy of God, mixed with grace, designed for, and adapted to reform the subjects of it. Whereas punishment, properly so called, is not designed to promote reformation, but to satisfy justice, to support the authority of law, and give stability and security to government. This distinction in punishments is recognized in all well regulated governments. The smaller penalties of the law are disciplinary, the greater are capital punishments. If a man be a drunkard, and troublesome, he is sent to the house of correction; if he kills his fellow creature, he must be hung for it.

Do, then, all transgressors suffer their full desert of punishment in this life? If they do, the argument for the immortality of the soul and a future state, built on the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, is lost. But if it can be shown that some transgressors *do not*, nor *cannot*, receive their full desert of punishment in this world, in either, or all the three ways named above, then, of course, there must be a future state, where they are so punished.

1. I am *sure* that the full punishment of sin does not consist in that trouble and anxiety of mind, produced by *outward circumstances*. There may be some wicked men who are greatly afflicted in this way, but there are others who are not so troubled. As it re-

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spects uncomfortable circumstances and outward afflictions in this life, the righteous have, and always have had as large, if not a much larger portion than the wicked. Here the righteous receive their "*evil things*," and the wicked their "*good things*;" but after death, the one shall be "*comforted*," and the other "*tormented*." How can the following scriptures be reconciled with the idea, that the sinner receives his full punishment in his outward circumstances? "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them." "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" This we are told, is the case "while they live, and after that, they go to the dead."

2. It is not necessary for me to prove, that the wicked do not receive the full desert of their wickedness in the diseases and pains of body, which they suffer in this life. It will be time enough to do this, when any one shall attempt to show that they suffer more in these ways, than the most holy men upon earth.

3. But it may be necessary to stop a little, and inquire whether the wicked receive their full desert of punishment in the accusations and remorse of conscience which they suffer in this life? It is true, that all men have a conscience; and that many wicked men suffer great terror and remorse of conscience. But in no instance in this life, do they suffer all their sins deserve. And there is a class of wicked men, who suffer no pain or remorse of conscience at all. But these should be the most alive to suffering; for they are the most wicked. But their consciences are "seared with a hot iron," and are "*past feeling*." In the progress of vice, the remonstrances of conscience do not become more and more powerful, but weaker and less efficient; and at the point where vice reaches its greatest obduracy, conscience ceases its functions. The natural tendency of vice is, to stupify the mind, and harden the heart; so that the more a man sins, the less remorse he feels. For instance; let us suppose a youth, who, educated by pious parents, refrains from all immorality till he comes to manhood. He then leaves his parents, mingles with a new and vicious society, and is exposed to various temptations; and though he preserves his morality inviolate for a while, yet, through bad example, he gives way to anger, and blasphemes the name of God! He has now done what he never did before! An awful sensation passes through his mind; horror and trembling fasten upon his soul! He is stung by remorse of conscience; and suffers much for many days. But after a time, anger moves again; temptation rises, and he utters another profane oath! He now feels great remorse, but the sensation of guilt is not so sharp

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as before, neither does it last so long. In a shorter time, he gets more angry, and again uses profane language; his conscience is not yet *seared;* he still feels remorse, but not so much as he did on the first and second offences. His transgressions are now repeated, and multiplied; while his remorse of conscience grows weaker and weaker, till he swears at every breath; and profane language is mingled with his most common conversation; he is now *past feeling*. A by-stander reproves him, and tells him how notorious he is for profanity. He is surprised to learn that his mouth is constantly polluted with profane language. How then does he *now* suffer for those crimes, which he so deliberately, yet almost insensibly, commits? His present sufferings are little to be dreaded. Though his wickedness is very great, still, he is quite happy as it respects remorse of conscience.

Again. Suppose the youthful pirate, the first time he sheds innocent blood, suffers *all possible remorse*, while he beholds the active limb palsied in death, the sparkling eye with a glossy hue, sunk back in its socket, and the whole visage pale and lifeless; and while he realizes the great wickedness which he has committed; yet the image of misery soon passes away, and he repeats his crimes of robbery and murder, till he can see a man bleed and die, with as much composure and as little remorse as the butcher feels when he slays the brute. He finally riots in human carnage, without the least sensation of pain!

Now, if we were to admit, for the sake of the argument, that these transgressors did, in the first instance, suffer all their crimes deserved, either we must conclude that their subsequent acts of blasphemy and murder did not deserve so much punishment as the first, or, that they do not suffer in this world all the punishment that justice demands. But who is so diabolical as to take the first of these, and say, that the *more* a man sins, the less he *deserves* to suffer? For it is a *fact*, and no one can deny it, that the *more* a man sins, the *less* remorse he suffers. I am bold, therefore, to affirm, and I do it without the fear of contradiction, either that sin deserves no punishment, or that sinners will be punished in another world. For many of the vilest transgressors do not suffer so much remorse for their *ten thousand black crimes*, as many of the most holy men on earth do, for some small omissions of duty, or wanderings of mind. Let the modern infidel, covered with a religious mask, come forward and take away this argument, if he be able. Let him show that *all sin* deserves *some* punishment; and then let him affirm, that all punishment is confined to this world; it will then devolve on him to show that the greatest transgressors *always* receive the greatest punishment, which I challenge him to prove.

It may be said, that some sinners have great remorse of con-

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science in their last moments; and this is *true* of some; but *not of all*. Many of the *same men* who sin with a high hand, and live without remorse, *die as they live*. And besides, in numerous cases, in a fit of drunkenness, by a potion of opium, or poison, or by some awful providence, these great and stupid transgressors are cut down, and sent into eternity, by the most easy death possible, without a moment's remorse or warning. We are therefore led to this conclusion; that it is not only probable, but *absolutely certain*, that some sinners will be punished after death; and if so, there must of course be a *future state*.

III. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, AND A FUTURE STATE, ARE MOST CLEARLY REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH.

The arguments and reasonings which have been adduced, are certainly of great weight; but in a subject of so much importance to us, we never could have rested with full satisfaction on any arguments, but those drawn from the express declarations of Almighty God. Here we find no obscurity—no uncertainty. Every thing is made clear and plain. Our foundation stands strong and firm. No proposition whatever is more clearly supported by the Book of God, than the one under consideration. In the early ages of the world, the first openings of this great and sublime doctrine appeared. In later times, the light dawned with increasing lustre; but it was not until the Sun of righteousness arose, in the incarnation of Christ, that the great discovery was completed. This doctrine was revealed to the Jews, though not so clearly, as to Christians; for it is emphatically said, that *life and immortality were brought to light by the* GOSPEL. The Mosaic dispensation was typical; it dealt much in temporal rewards and punishments. Scripture phraseology, however, shows that this doctrine was understood and believed by the Jews—not to say, that the belief of a future state lies at the very foundation of all religion.

At the burning bush, God proclaimed himself to Moses, as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Our Saviour quoted this passage to confute the Sadducees, the materialists of his day, and observed, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." But the bodies of these holy men had been reduced to ashes in a cave, in Machpelah, long before God appeared to Moses at the burning bush. Consequently, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living intellectual beings, when this declaration was made. It is said, that "Abraham gave up the ghost, and was gathered to his people." This must refer to the gathering of his soul to the assembly of the just; for his body was buried several hundred miles from his fathers. Hence says the Psalmist, "*gather* not my soul with sinners." St. Paul represents the ancient worthies, as seeking

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"a heavenly country," and "a better resurrection." Our text, which is from the Jewish Scriptures, is most conclusive proof of the soul's immortality. What stronger language could be used to show that the soul *does not* die with the body? "Then shall the dust return to the dust as it was; *and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*" But we come now to the New Testament, where the proofs of a future state multiply and brighten. And,—

1. *There are certain persons, of whom it is said, that they shall never die.* "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall *never die.*" "If a man eat of this bread, he shall *live forever.*" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my word, he shall *never see death.*" From hence it appears that, by performing certain conditions, men may "live forever." But none are exempt from the death of the body. It is, therefore, the soul that shall not die. We are not, however, to infer from this, that the wicked shall be annihilated; but only, that they shall experience a death from which the righteous are exempt. "This is the second death:"—"where their worm *dieth not*, and the fire *is not* quenched."

2. *The immortality of the soul may be inferred from Scripture instances of committing the spirit to God.* "Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The former of these, (the Psalmist,) when he uttered these words, was in imminent danger. St. Stephen, and our blessed Lord, were in the last agonies of death. These were their last prayers. That these holy characters believed in the immortality of the soul is certain. That they were divinely inspired is equally true. They could not, therefore, have been deceived. To say this, especially of the Son of God, would be the most daring blasphemy!

3. *We learn from the Scriptures, that the soul, on the death of the body, goes immediately to happiness or misery.* "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Paradise, "Abraham's bosom," and "hell," cannot mean the grave; for Paradise was promised in answer to prayer; but the grave is inherited by all, whether they pray or not. Angels do not carry the body to the grave; but they carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, after the death of the body. Men do not see that which is afar off, with their bodily eyes in the grave; but the rich man, after he died, saw "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

4. *The Scriptures speak particularly of the existence of the soul,*

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after the death of the body. Christ affirms, that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living in his time, in quoting and commenting on the words of the Lord to Moses at the burning bush. But their bodies had all slept in the cave of Machpelah 1800 years. Moses was living at the same time, and appeared at the transfiguration, in company with Elias, and conversed with Christ, in the presence of Peter, James and John, upon the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." But the body of Moses had, long before this, gone back to dust; for God had buried him more than 1400 years before Christ's time, in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor. The antediluvians were alive when St. Peter wrote his first general Epistle, and were *then* shut up in the prison of hell; though the long suffering of God had waited in the days of Noah, a hundred and twenty years, when the ark was preparing, while Christ, by the mission of his Spirit, went and preached to them, through Noah. These miserable spirits, therefore, did not die with their bodies. They still have a conscious existence, and are waiting in prison the judgment of the GREAT DAY. St. John tells us, that he "saw under the altar the SOULS" of the martyrs; "and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" This text is most conclusive proof of the immortality of the soul; but it cannot be reconciled with common sense, if the soul perish with the body.

5. *We may notice a few more passages, which are not properly included in either of the preceding classes.* It is said of the disciples, that "they were terified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." And though they were deceived as to the *fact*, yet they were not deceived as to their *theory*. This text shows that the Jews believed in the immortality of the soul, for they "supposed that they had seen a spirit," when Jesus "appeared in the midst of them." Christ said to his disciples, "Fear not them which kill the body, *but are not able to kill the soul;* but fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Here we learn, that the soul *lives* after the body is *dead;* and that men are *unable* to destroy it. St. Paul represents the body, as an "earthly house," or "tabernacle," in which the soul lives; and says, we may be "at home in the body," and "absent from the Lord," or "absent from the body," and "present with the Lord;" and "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He further tells us, that he once "knew a *man*—whether *in* the body, or *out* of the body, he could not tell: God knoweth." From all which we learn, that the soul exists independently of the body; as the expressions,

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"in the body," and "out of the body," plainly show. The Scriptures are abundant upon this subject. Enough, however, have been adduced, to prove the point in question. More could not give the subject any additional weight. The immortality of the soul, and a future state of existence, is clearly a Bible doctrine. It stands or falls with the truth of revelation. If the Law and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, are sufficient authority, then our subject stands on an immovable basis. Nature and reason make it *strongly probable*, but the Bible makes it CERTAIN.

INFERENCES.

1. *If the soul be immortal, it must be exceedingly valuable.*

The existence of the soul, as we have already seen, runs parallel with that of Jehovah. It is not only to survive the dissolution of the body, and the wreck of worlds, but to bloom in eternal youth before the throne of God; or be doomed eternally to dwell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. How, then, shall we estimate its value? If the soul were to die with the body, or survive it only for a limited time, we might come nearer to a proper estimate of its true value; but when we consider, that it is as imperishable as the throne of heaven, and that it commences here an interminable state of existence, we find ourselves lost,—

"Where thought can't follow, and bold fancy dies."

If the human mind be capable of pursuing the subject further, Dr. Young will lead it onward:—

"Knowest thou the *importance* of a soul immortal?
Behold this midnight glory: Worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! Redouble this amaze;
Ten thousand add; add twice ten thousand more;
Then weigh the whole; *one soul* outweighs them all;
And calls the astonishing magnificence
Of *unintelligent* creation *poor*."

The value of the soul might be shown from the price of its redemption, and the means used for its salvation, as well as from its duration; but we can only ask, in the words of our Lord; "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2. *If the soul be immortal, the loss of it must be indescribable.* The word of God on this point, is neither vague nor indefinite; for here we are taught, that "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,"—that he "shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy,"—and "upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." It is said that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting

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punishment,"—and that they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,"—"where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched,"—and where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever." The Lord Jesus says of those who are "filthy," "unholy," and "unrighteous," let them be so "*still*,"—and he will command them to "depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And there—

. . . . "The hopeless soul,
Bound to the bottom of the flaming pool,
Though loath, and ever loud blaspheming, owns
'Tis justly doomed to pour eternal groans;
To talk to fiery tempests, and implore
The raging flame to give its fury o'er;
To writhe, to toss; to pant beneath its load,
And bear the weight of an offended God."

"And there their voice, ordained on hymns to dwell,
Corrupts to groans, and blows the flames of hell;
There they must look with terror on their gain,
And, with existence, only measure pain."

And what does all this imply? What is it to lose the soul, and be damned forever? An important question; but who can give the solution? Neither angels, nor devils, can fully describe the horrors of the damned! A land of Bibles, where the silver trumpet sounds the alarm in Zion, and proclaims liberty to captives, is far removed from the prison of hell!

To hell's dark domain the sound of the gospel never reaches; there the influences of the Spirit are never felt! These followed the sinner through life, but they left him at death. And how many aggravating circumstances now attend his condemnation! He goes from *Christendom* to *hell;* and in looking back through his past life, he perceives that the strivings of the Spirit, the blood of Christ, the sermons of ministers, the prayers of Christians, the tears of relatives, and the dispensations of Providence *hedged* him in, and he has broke through them all! He now remembers that his heart was once tender, that he was almost a Christian, that the terms of salvation were easy, and that he is damned *through his own fault!* But all this, and much more, makes only the negative part of his hell. He has sensible pain. He is alive to the most acute suffering. The gnawings of the never-dying worm perpetuates his anguish; the weight of Jehovah's wrath rests heavily upon his soul; and the most keen despair is his constant companion.

Reader! art thou yet out of Christ? And hast thou not yet made thy peace with God? "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest

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thou be consumed." But first, fall on thy knees, and thank God, that thou art not dead and damned. Thy immortal soul is at stake! Hell, beneath thee,—

> "Expands its jaws, how dreadful to survey!
> And roars outrageous for its destined prey."

Thou art already at death's door, and on the very brink of hell!

> "But while the lamp holds out to burn,
> The vilest sinner may return."—

"FLEE THE WRATH TO COME! SEEK THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND, AND CALL UPON HIM WHILE HE IS NEAR."

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SERMON XIX.

BY REV. J. P. DURBIN,

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CHARACTER AND MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST

JOHN, I. 1—14.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD. THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM; AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE. IN HIM WAS LIFE; AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. AND THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS; AND THE DARKNESS COMPREHENDETH IT NOT.

THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM GOD, WHOSE NAME WAS JOHN. THE SAME CAME FOR A WITNESS, TO BEAR WITNESS OF THE LIGHT, THAT ALL MEN THROUGH HIM MIGHT BELIEVE. HE WAS NOT THAT LIGHT, BUT WAS SENT TO BEAR WITNESS OF THAT LIGHT. THAT WAS THE TRUE LIGHT, WHICH LIGHTETH EVERY MAN THAT COMETH INTO THE WORLD. HE WAS IN THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM, AND THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT.

HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. BUT AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM, TO THEM GAVE HE POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD, EVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE ON HIS NAME: WHICH WERE BORN, NOT OF BLOOD, NOR OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH, NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, BUT OF GOD. AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, (AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER,) FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

By consulting the fourteenth and eighteenth verses, we learn, the text regards the Lord Jesus Christ; and the whole of it is predicated of him. It has always been considered among the most important portions of the New Testament, and is well worth our minute and uninterrupted attention.

Some of its principal features may be presented under the following propositions:

I. Some remarks on the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. That the Divine Being, (the Lord Jesus Christ,) ap-

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PEARED IN THE WORLD, AND DWELT AMONG MEN IN THE FLESH, IN ORDER TO GIVE TRUE LIFE AND LIGHT TO MANKIND.

1. *Some suppose him to have been a very great and good* MAN; *the chief of prophets and moral teachers;* BUT NO MORE.

This opinion is embraced by few; and is not only *rash*, but *inconsistent*. That it is rash, the good sense of the Christian world will show; and that it is inconsistent, this single reflection will prove, viz. he could not have been a *good man*, when he *assumed to himself the prerogatives* of Jehovah, and his name also, if he were not Jehovah. I need not pursue this opinion further; I am assured that no true Christian would tolerate, not only the opinion, but scarcely the discussion of it. This we may read in the *indignant blush*, we see mantling every countenance, at the bare mention that the Saviour of the world is *only* a man like unto ourselves.

2. *Some have supposed the Lord Jesus Christ to be an* ANGEL; *possibly, the* ARCHANGEL.

This opinion may be mentioned without producing *such* a paroxysm of aversion as the former; simply because it exalts the character of the Saviour *somewhat*. But when the good man examines it closely, he finds the same opposition, both in faith and feeling, which he has to the first.

First—it is inconsistent with the plain declaration of the Scriptures —"Thou madest him *a little* LOWER than the angels." "Verily, he took *not on him the nature of angels*." Again:—"Let all the angels of God worship him." But can we conceive it reasonable for one angel to worship another? Certainly not. This opinion, as well as the first, is at variance with the whole scheme of man's redemption, by a vicarious atonement; and of course, at variance with all the scriptures which witness the truth of that scheme.

Secondly—it must of course be at variance with the good man's *feelings;* because, it takes away the only foundation on which *he can be good, or be happy*. He is just as conscious of having obtained goodness of heart, and peace of mind, by means of the vicarious atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is, that he is good, or has peace of mind. Hence the Scriptures, and sound religious experience, testify against this opinion of our Saviour's character.

3. *Some suppose the Lord Jesus Christ is superior, not only to* ANGELS, but to all other created beings; and that he cannot be referred to any *class* of creatures, because he is *sui generis;* the only being of his kind, forming a link between all other creatures and Jehovah; being *superior* to them, but *inferior* to him, though next to him in rank and dignity.

This is the most dangerous opinion of all; because it seems to exalt the Saviour as high as possible, without making him God; and

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so near to the Divine Being, as *in some sense*, to entitle him to the appellation of *God*, and to a *qualified worship* of men and angels.

On these principles the Scriptures, which declare *he is an object of worship*, and that *he is God*, are interpreted, with some show of plausibility, and mislead many.

Let us divest this opinion of its *dress*, and see its *naked* merits and meaning. *The Lord Jesus Christ is not God, but a creature: and he is a creature above all other creatures, and nearest to God in point of rank, nature and dignity.* This, then, is the opinion, and it is at variance with the Scriptures, in every view. "Thou madest him a *little* LOWER *than the angels.*" This single text will ever bar this opinion. How can he be *superior* to all created beings, and yet "a little LOWER than angels?"

If he be a *creature at all*, he is *absolutely* a creature. How, then, without misleading the religious sense of mankind, could the *names* and *prerogatives* of Jehovah be applied to him? and yet this is done many times in the Scriptures, as all acknowledge. This single consideration must destroy the opinion.

If he be *worshipped at all*, he must receive an *unqualified* worship. There is no such thing as *inferior worship.* The human mind cannot conceive of such a thing; it has never felt such an emotion. What some would call an *inferior* worship, is what all men, *out of view of this question*, call *esteem, respect*, or *reverence*, according to the different degrees of excellence in the object of them, and the degree of devotion in the subjects of them. *Worship* belongs to God only; *esteem, respect*, and *reverence* is due to *virtue* and *excellence* in any being. Since, therefore, it is a settled question, that our Lord Jesus Christ is presented, by the Holy Scriptures, *as an object of worship*, to men and angels, the opinion under consideration must be yielded, and he must be considered "*God* over all, blessed for ever more;" as says the apostle.

4. *The third opinion will be further disproved, by establishing the* FOURTH; *which is:—Our Lord Jesus Christ is essentially, eternally, and absolutely God.*

This proposition is *thus* worded, to meet the sublimated reasoning of some. It differs nothing in sense, from the simple proposition, JESUS CHRIST IS GOD.

In support of this opinion, reference may be made—

1. *To the opinions of the primitive Christians.* The *Apostles' Creed* is evidence on this point; not that it was composed by the apostles (which is not probable), but because it was current in the churches of the *second and third* centuries: thus giving evidence of the antiquity of the sentiments. It is found, as it now stands in the English liturgy, in the works of *St. Ambrose*, who flourished in the *third* century. Other ancient creeds might be referred to with the

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same effect; as tne form of apostolical doctrine collected by Origen: a fragment of a creed preserved by Tertullian; a remnant of a creed composed by Cyprian, and others. Some of these as early as the *second* century; but none of them so clear and comprehensive as the *Athanasian Creed*, which was composed about A. D. 325, most probably by the *first* general council of Nice, and of which the *Nicene Creed* is a paraphrase, made at the *second* general council of Nice, A. D. 381.

The reasons are very obvious why the creed should be more full and satisfactory, than the earlier ones: because creeds, or forms of confession, were first introduced, in order to preserve *unity* of *faith* in all the churches. The necessity of these creeds was suggested thus: at first, the Christian doctrine embraced but few points of faith, and these of a *general nature*. In process of teaching, and expounding these, the general doctrine was explained *in detail*. This necessarily produced *new questions* and *differences of opinion*, not only among different churches, but among the members of the same church. Hence, the *first* creeds were drawn up by individual bishops or pastors, for the use of their own people. But these did not produce *uniformity in all the churches:* hence, the institution of *councils* to form creeds. These councils were, *in number*, and *weight*, as the *magnitude* of the differences of opinion to be settled. The differences at *first* being small, and involving a *single* point, the agents concerned in composing it were few, possibly a single one; and the creed, or formula of doctrine, was *correspondingly brief* and *simple;* comprehending merely a general view of the principal points of Christian faith, and *particularly the point in dispute*, or the ground of difference. But in process of time, other points arose in detail; and even questions arose out of the questions settled by a former creed; and differences arose in regard to the very explanations, or sense contained in those creeds: hence, larger assemblies were convened, and more extensive and complex creeds formed, as the controversy was increased in *magnitude* and *complexity*. This process continually increased the amount of *matter* and *minuteness* of detail in each successive formula of Christian faith; the *last* generally retaining the *doctrine* of the *preceding* ones, but enlarging in the details, or adding to meet some new question which had arisen. In proof of this, there is no difference, *in regard to doctrine*, between the *Apostles' Creed*, which is the most ancient of all, the *Athanasian Creed*, composed A. D. 325, and the *Nicene Creed*, A. D. 381. And all these affirm the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, *and all of them are used in the services of the Church of England.*

Under this head of reference, the testimonies of *Josephus* and *Pliny* should be mentioned, as neither of them were Christians, and lived in the *first century*, and gave their testimony *incidentally*.

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Josephus, in his Antiquities of the Jews, book 18, chap. 3, sect. 3, says—"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if it be lawful to call him a man*," &c. This quotation is not proof positive of the divinity of Christ, but it is proof that there was something *unearthly*, and something very awful and remarkable in his character, and certainly goes far to attach the idea of *divinity* to Jesus. Because Josephus was very conversant with the greatness and sanctity of the glorious prophets; and yet he does not hesitate to call them men, and treat of them as such. It may be inferred, therefore, that there was something differing from all other men, in the appearance and conduct of the Lord Jesus, which inspired a strong reverence for him, as for some superior being. And such he really was; even "GOD OVER ALL."

The testimony of *Pliny* is decisive. It is found in a letter to *Trajan*, to whom he writes for instruction, how to deal with the Christians convicted of being such, and yet apostatize; or are very young, &c. He mentions, *incidentally*, that "They meet together before day, *and sing a hymn* TO CHRIST AS TO THEIR GOD." (See Pliny's letter to Trajan, in 3d vol. Whist. Josephus, last page, edition 1809.)

In this quotation none can be deceived. It clearly states the opinion of the Christians in the *first century*, *before* any difference of opinion had arisen; and this opinion is, JESUS CHRIST IS GOD.

2. In support of this opinion, reference may be made to the *assumptions of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.*

First—He assumes the prerogatives of God.

This is the case in several particulars; but it is sufficient to mention only *the power to forgive sins*. That our Lord Jesus professed to have this power of *himself*, cannot be doubted. Because he pronounced forgiveness openly and repeatedly, to different persons, without making reference to any power or authority but *his own*.

A case of this kind is mentioned in Mark, chap. iii. verses 3—11. He pardoned the man in the presence of the scribes, who declared it "blasphemy;" because it was an encroachment on the prerogative of God. They immediately asked, indignantly, "Who can forgive sins BUT GOD ONLY?" Had the scribes been mistaken in the opinion, *God only can forgive sins*, the Lord Jesus would have corrected their mistake; and had they been *mistaken in regard to the nature of the action of our Saviour*, he would have corrected them in this, also; for they evidently understood, that he, himself, forgave the man's sins. But, *instead of correcting them*, in their opinions, *he proceeds to* CONFIRM *them, by giving them additional and clearer proof, in the repetition of the offensive deed.* Thus proclaiming himself God, by assuming and using, in his own name, and by his own authority, the prerogative of God.

Secondly—He assumes the attributes of God.

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It might easily be shown that Jesus assumed *several* of the *incommunicable* attributes of Jehovah. But it is sufficient, for the present purpose, to establish the assumption or possession of *one*. Let the *omnipresence* of God be selected.

That our Saviour gave instructions and made promises, which implied that he was possessed of ubiquity, no biblical critic can doubt: The promise, "Lo, I am with you to the end of the world," is proof sufficient on this point.

Assuming (as all will grant) that those instructions were *well* given, and these promises *rightly* made, it follows, *necessarily*, that he was in possession of the attribute of *omnipresence*. This simple question, then, will determine the character of our Lord Jesus Christ: Can any being be in possession of the attribute of *omnipresence*, without being God? There has been but *one* answer, and *never* can be but one, to this question. *He cannot*. Because, Omnipresence is an *incommunicable* attribute of Jehovah, and must necessarily be *inherent in the nature* of the being possessing it.

Inasmuch, therefore, as it cannot be denied that our Lord Jesus Christ professed to have the attribute of omnipresence; and that any being in possession of it must be God: it follows *Jesus Christ is God*.

Thirdly—He assumes the titles or names of God.

In the first chapter of Revelation, our Lord Jesus Christ says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the ALMIGHTY."

Here is an assumption of *two* of the most distinctive and awful titles of Jehovah. When we recollect, how important it is to call each thing and person by their proper appellations, and, particularly, the *jealousy* of the Almighty, in regard to his name, (the Psalmist says, "holy and reverend is his name,") can it be supposed that the Lord Jesus Christ would assume the titles of Jehovah, if he were not Jehovah? Certainly not.

3. In support of the proposition, *Jesus Christ is God*, reference may be made to the *prophecies, previous* to his birth. Of these there are many. One only need be selected, as a specimen; and one which all agree is to be referred to Christ. Isaiah ix. 6. "*For unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called* WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. To the honest and Christian reader, this language needs no comment. He must feel that the prophet's heart was warmed with the astonishingly glorious prospect of *God incarnate*, for the redemption of the world.

4. Reference may be made to *the opinions of his apostles*, as preserved in the New Testament: and first to the *text*. The original stands thus: Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν, καὶ Θεὸς

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ἦν ὁ λόγος. Our translation is literal, and of course correct. Yet it has this objection: it strangely transposes the words in the last member of the text. Why the translators should have done it, when, to have retained the order of the original, would have given the sense as correctly, and much more nervously, cannot even be conjectured. Put down the English translation *in the order of the original*, and it will stand thus: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*, AND GOD WAS THE WORD. Here is a simple affirmation; so clear, so much to the point, that the question of the divinity or Godhead of Christ remains indisputable, upon the supposition that the *Word* is Christ; and this is beyond all doubt from the 14th verse. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

The tradition, that John wrote this gospel to put down, by apostolical authority, the heresy of Cerinthus, who denied the divinity of Christ, receives strong support from the abrupt and decided manner in which he opens the book, by affirming, as strongly as language can affirm, that JESUS CHRIST IS GOD.

A most satisfactory proof of the deity of Christ is derived from a collation of Isa. vii. 14, with Matt. i. 22 and 23. The prophet says: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name EMMANUEL." Matthew says: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name* EMMANUEL, *which, being interpreted, is*, GOD WITH US." The words of the prophet are expressly applied to Jesus; and the peculiar *name* was given him from heaven, that it might designate his true character to all the world. The custom, *anciently*, of giving names to individuals which should designate something peculiar as belonging to them, was founded in the very nature of things, and was of great utility. *Words are the signs of ideas*, and at first their *sounds* were made, by the individual appropriating them, to correspond with the sense he intended to convey: and when the sense became complex, the words became compound; the composition of the word answering to the composition of the sense. This is the case in all ancient and primitive languages: it is exemplified in the names of many of the *Indians* in North America: instances abound in the Scriptures: the first man was called *Adam*, i. e. *earthly man*. Thus indicating his *origin* by his name. And Adam called his wife's name, *Eve*, i. e. *Life*. Thus indicating, by her name, that *she was the mother of all living*. The son of Terah was called *Abram*, i. e. *an elevated father*. Indicating by his *name* his glory, either as the *first* progenitor of the Saviour, or as being *the father of the*

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faithful. Afterwards, his name was *extended from Abram to Abraham* i. e. *the father of a great multitude;* thus indicating by his *name* that his posterity should be numerous.

In accordance with this custom, founded on the nature of things, and utility, Heaven directs the Lord Jesus to be called *Emmanuel,* a Hebrew word, which, says the evangelist, being interpreted, (i. e. *translated* from Hebrew into Greek,) is μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός—GOD WITH US. Here we have the true character of our Lord Jesus presented in his *name,* and in his *Hebrew* name, interpreted by an inspired evangelist, signifying *God with us;* i. e. *God in human nature;* or, as the apostle expresses it, 1 Tim. iii. 16, GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. Here is the origin of the doctrine of THE INCARNATION. *Incarnation* is derived from *in* and *carnis, flesh,* signifying simply, *in the flesh;* and, as applied to God, *God in the flesh;* or, as the name Emmanuel declares, *God with us.*

This proof may be set in a clearer light, to the English reader, by observing: if the Saviour had been born a *Greek,* the enunciation of his name would have been in Greek, and stood thus: μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός—GOD WITH US. If he had been born an *Englishman,* the enunciation of his name would have been in *English,* and stood thus: GOD WITH US; (or, contracting the words to a single name,) *Godithus:* and these expressions would have been translated into *Hebrew* by the simple term, EMMANUEL.

Thus we see, as long as the name Emmanuel is allowed to Jesus Christ, he must be regarded as really and truly *God.*

A passage in John xvii. 3, has been supposed to obstruct the doctrine of the deity of Christ. It is this: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Here, say the objectors, the Father is called the *only true God,* and Jesus is mentioned as a *separate* being: of course, he is not the true God. This seems at first an almost conclusive argument. But let us interpret Scripture by Scripture, which is always considered the safest way; and particularly let the *author* of the above text explain it himself. In 1 John v. 20, these words are found: "And we know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding *that we may know him that is* TRUE, *and we are in him that is true, even in his Son* JESUS CHRIST. THIS *is the* TRUE GOD *and eternal life.*" This passage cannot be mistaken, nor misapplied. It is its own explanation; and would seem to have been designed, by the author, as a comment on the passage in the Gospel. The *first* passage can well be explained thus: *It is eternal life to know Thee, O Father, the only true God, and the plan of redemption which thou hast sent Jesus Christ into the world to execute for the salvation of men.* This explanation is consistent with the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and is *necessary* in order to make

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the text speak the truth. *Because, one might know the Father*, as a being simply considered, and might also *know Jesus Christ* as sent into the world by him; and yet *not* be in possession of eternal life, unless *he knew and experienced* the nature and design of his mission.

Again—The *text* says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." It will appear very clearly, that the evangelist asserts *Jesus Christ* (or the Word) *is the* MAKER *of all things*. But the apostle Paul says, Heb. iii. 4, "He that built all things is God:" therefore, *Jesus Christ is God.*

It would seem that this argument is irresistibly conclusive; and, that it may be remembered easily, it shall be reduced to a *syllogism:* The evangelist John says, *Jesus Christ made all things:* but the apostle Paul says, HE *that made all things is* GOD: therefore, JESUS CHRIST IS GOD: and let all the world answer, *Amen.*

Large additions might be made of similar arguments; but it is deemed unnecessary.

It will have been perceived, by the reader, from the foregoing quotations, and the arguments raised on them, that Jesus Christ is supposed to possess *two separate and distinct natures:* i. e. *humanity* and *divinity.* And it would as naturally be supposed, that if this was really his true character, it would have been noticed in the writings of the New Testament. *Query*, therefore, *Is this trait in the character of Christ acknowledged by the New Testament writers?*

It is a pleasure to answer this question in the *affirmative*, because the answer can be made entirely satisfactory. The sacred writers, understanding the fact of the existence of *two natures* in the person of Christ, i. e. *human nature*,—a human body and a reasonable soul,—and the *divine nature*,—the whole fulness of the Godhead united to this human nature, frequently speak of the person and actions of the Saviour as a mere man, and frequently speak of him as the very God; and sometimes mention him as both. The Scriptures, therefore, in reference to the Lord Jesus, may be referred to *three classes*, and a fine specimen of each produced.

1st CLASS: *Those which speak of him merely as a man.* "Made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them under the law"—"He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—He was an hungered"—"He was thirsty—weary," &c.—"He was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death"—"No man knoweth; no, not the Son"—"My father is greater than I"—"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, (God,) then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." And thus of all the scriptures which mention his *in*feriority and subjection to the Father. They are all referable to his humanity, which he assumed to redeem the world.

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2d CLASS: *Those which speak of him as God.* Those which have been produced in the foregoing arguments are referable to this class. But in addition;—Thomas says, "My Lord and my God." St. Paul says, "Adorn the doctrine of GOD OUR SAVIOUR."—Titus ii. 13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

This is an important passage, and deserves to be critically examined. προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαριαν ελπίδα καὶ επιφανειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ιησου Χριστου. Several eminent scholars render the passage thus: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, EVEN our Saviour Jesus Christ." The conjunction, καὶ, after "great God," being translated *even*, and without doubt *correctly*. Mr. *Parkhurst*, in his Greek Lexicon, gives *twenty-four* meanings to the conjunction, καὶ, and the *third* is, EVEN. This, then, is one of its *prime* meanings. Indeed, the *necessary* and *natural* sense of the place seems to require this translation. Because it is immediately added, "who (i. e. Jesus Christ) gave himself for us, that he might——purify *unto himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It is plain, from this passage, that the person, *for whom* a people were to be purified, is *Jesus Christ*. If Jesus Christ, then, be "the great God," in verse 13, the text is plain, and consistent with the general tenor of Scripture, and analogy of faith; but if it be not, then the text is inexplicable, or contradictory: For it is said in the Revelation, "Thou hast redeemed us to God." But the text, under consideration, says the saints are purified (or redeemed) *unto Jesus Christ:* therefore, *the great God*, in the text, is "even Jesus Christ." Other passages tending to the same conclusion might be produced.

If this were a suitable place to produce arguments, which would be proper only for the *classical* and *critical* readers, it would be a very pleasing task to produce the *doctrine of the government of the Greek Article*, as revived by the late Mr. *Grenville Sharp*, and illustrated and defended, clearly and ably, by Mr. *Wordsworth* and Dr. *Middleton;* and approved and used by Dr. *Adam Clark* and others. This doctrine establishes the *identity of Christ and God*, beyond a doubt, as exemplified in various passages of the New Testament, examined, as regards their construction with the article, by the usages of the ancient and pure Greek writers. It may hereafter be a matter of consideration before the public.

3d CLASS: *Those Scriptures which speak of the* TWO *natures of our Lord Jesus, in conjunction.* John i. 14, "The Word was made (or assumed) flesh." Here, the "Word" is called "God" in verse 1, thus indicating his *deity;* and the text affirms his *humanity* under the term "flesh." Rom. i 3, 4, "Concerning

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his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David, *according* to the (his) flesh." (Here is not only a direct declaration of his *humanity*, but a strong intimation that he had *another nature*, by the words "according to the flesh.") "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness," &c. Here is a developement of his other nature, in the words, *Son of God*, in opposition to, *seed of David*. Rom. ix. 5, "And of whom, as concerning the *flesh*, *Christ came* (here is his *humanity* distinctly named), *who is over all*, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER." Here is a declaration of his divinity, beyond dispute.

Other passages might be produced, under each of the three classes; but these are deemed sufficient. Let a gentle admonition be given to the young and inexperienced *biblical reader*, in a view of the controversy respecting the *deity of Christ*. You may be sometimes perplexed by an ingenious antagonist, or even by your own observations, while reading the Scriptures, by passages such as these—"My father is greater than I." "Jesus wept—was hungry, thirsty," &c. Recollect they belong to the *first class* of Scriptures, and regard him as a man. This single reflection will explain them all. But who can explain such passages, as have been produced, to prove the deity of Christ, without allowing him the divinity contended for? No one, certainly. Moreover, recollect that this view of the character of Christ, lies at the foundation of the *redemption of the world by a vicarious atonement;*—and that the doctrine of a vicarious atonement is founded upon the *doctrine of original sin*, or the universal corruption of our nature; and that *this* doctrine shows the necessity of the *new birth*. Thus you will see that the *deity of Christ* is the key stone to the whole system of revealed religion, and without it the value of the revelation of God is very much diminished, if, indeed, it is not destroyed. If you love any, or all of these doctrines *now*, forget not that you must give them up, *in detail*, as soon as you consent to yield the divinity of your Saviour. This awful issue does not enter the mind when it *first* begins to doubt the real divinity of Christ. Could the mind see at *first*, and *at one view*, WHAT it was yielding, when it *first* consents to yield the divinity of its Saviour, it would experience a sudden revulsion, and horror, at the extent of the defection from "the faith once delivered to the saints." The mind apostatizes *gradually*, not *suddenly:* it gives up truth *in detail*, without knowing to what extent the yielding of the first point will lead: nay, if it be told it will lead to such an extent or bearing, the individual is earnest in declaring *it will not—he does not intend it*. Poor, deluded man! having lost his anchor, and being set adrift, who can answer for his course? None: possibly his real loss can only be unfolded by eternity. Be prevailed upon, then, not to be easily "carried about with every

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wind of doctrine," but "hold fast the form of sound words." The opponents of the deity of your Saviour will assail you by asking, *How can three be one?* Thus taking for granted, that *Trinitarians* believe "three are one," *which is not true.* Trinitarians deny it absolutely. Yet deceived by the question, and unable to explain how *three are one*, you begin to doubt the deity of your Saviour, and finally deny his Godhead, without knowing *how much* you deny in that single act. Pause a moment on this momentous question. Let a Trinitarian explain the point where nearly *all* are deceived, and turned from the faith, who are deceived. Trinitarians deny that their doctrine is "three are one," in the sense in which their opponents ask the question. Trinitarians are Trinitarians *only in regard to the* PERSONS *in the Godhead, not in regard to the Godhead.* They do not say *there are three Godheads, or three Gods*, but three *persons* in the Godhead: that is, *three persons*, but *one God.* Trinitarians believe in the *unity of God* as firmly as their opponents. And it is a wrong done them, when their opponents ask, *Can three Gods be one God?* Trinitarians never said this. Then, gentle reader, be not deceived by these insidious and daring questions. But "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labor is not in vain."

With these remarks, the character of the *natural dignity* of our Lord Jesus Christ will be passed. The next proposition raised on the text demands attention.

II. THAT THIS DIVINE BEING, (THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,) APPEARED IN THE WORLD, AND DWELT AMONG MEN IN THE FLESH, IN ORDER TO GIVE TRUE LIFE AND LIGHT TO MANKIND.

Of the whole, and every part of this proposition, the last verse in the text is a sufficient confirmation. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." Again: 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God was manifest in the flesh." All agree this passage is predicated of our Lord Jesus. Indeed this is clear, as well as the *design* of his manifestation, from what follows:—"preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory;" which could be affirmed only of Jesus Christ. Heb. ii. 14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same," &c. All allow this is affirmed of the Lord Jesus. Scores of passages might be transcribed to the same purpose. "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." Col. ii. 9, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." In this passage the great truth of the *incarnation of the Deity* is asserted with studied precision and strength. "In him," i. e. the visible person of Christ, as the 8th verse says: here

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then is his humanity, which the apostle calls, in another place, "the vail," or *shrine*, as it might be rendered: in this *shrine* the GODHEAD dwelt, as a burning lamp within a glass, without being any more mixed with the shrine (or his *humanity*) than the *flame* is with the *glass*. Hence, the doctrine of *two* natures in the person of Christ does not imply *confusion*, or *mixture* of natures, but only an *interminable union*. The Godhead, in the person of Christ, is precisely the same, in nature and dignity, as if it were not there; or as if considered absolutely. And the humanity of Christ is perfect humanity, pure and uncorrupted, precisely as if the Godhead was not united with it. The *union of the two* constitutes the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

But let the text be examined somewhat critically, and it will be found to exclude the possibility of an interpretation which goes to say, "the fulness of the Godhead in him," simply means, *he was endued with the heavenly spirit, wisdom and power, without measure.* Most injurious and false interpretation! contrary to the meaning of every word in the text. In the first place, the word translated *Godhead*, cannot be made to mean an *influence*, or impartation of properties, or power at all. Θεοτης, from Θεος, God, is a word used to express every possible, natural, and moral perfection, quality, or attribute, appertaining to the Divine Being, *combined in one perfect whole*, so as to constitute one God. Thus we cannot say of the attribute *omnipotence, it is Godhead;* nor of *omniscience*, or any other attribute, *it is Godhead. Godhead* expresses the idea of indissoluble union of all the powers and perfections of God, forming *one active, harmonious, indivisible whole.* Of course, if we have under consideration an *effect* or *influence*, produced by this whole, we cannot call this effect or influence *Godhead;* for this would be to call the *effect* the *cause* which produced it; and thus confound the two, which are necessarily separate. And it is *absurd in itself* to consider a *part* or *portion* of *Godhead:* such an idea cannot be conceived, in view of the true notion of *Godhead.* Let our English word *Godhead* be analyzed. It is composed of *two* simple English words, *God* and *head:* the *first* designating the powers and attributes intended; the *second*, that *those* powers and attributes are rationally constituted together, so as all of them to act simultaneously and harmoniously, and thus produce *unity of action*, under the direction of *unity of will*, in the being whose powers and attributes are said to be so constituted. The powers and attributes of God, in this harmonious constitution, involving *unity of action*, under the direction of *unity of will*, is *Godhead.* Hence the very essence of the notion of *Godhead*, is a CONSTITUTED WHOLE, and of course *indivisible.* It is plain, therefore, that *Godhead* is the *strongest* and most *unequivocal* term in the English language, to designate the Divine Being. Who can withstand the conviction, in view of these facts, that the only living and true God assumed our

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nature in order to redeem us, when the apostle says, "All the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him *bodily*?" None, certainly, none. From *Scripture*, therefore, it is plain, *the Divine Being appeared in the world, and dwelt in the flesh, among men.*

This cardinal doctrine of revealed religion, as might have been expected, is spread through all the eastern world, by *tradition*. It is found in their sacred books. The following pertinent testimony is translated from the original *Sanscreet* by Dr. C. WILKINS, and is still found on a stone in the East Indies: "The Deity, who is the Lord, the possessor of all, APPEARED in this ocean of natural beings, at the beginning of the *Kalee Yoog* (the age of contention and baseness). He who is omnipresent, and everlastingly to be contemplated, the Supreme Being, the Eternal One, the Divinity worthy to be adored, APPEARED HERE, *with a portion of his* DIVINE NATURE. Reverence be unto thee, in the form of *Bŏŏd-dhă!* Reverence be unto the Lord of the earth! Reverence be unto thee, an INCARNATION of the Deity, and the Eternal One," &c. See *Dr. A. Clark*, on Luke i. 68.

This same doctrine is largely confirmed by Dr. C. BUCHANAN, in his "Star in the East." His knowledge was derived on the spot, by observation, personally made, during an official residence in India.

He says: "The Hindoos believe in *one* God Brahma, the Creator of all things; and yet they represent him as subsisting in *three persons;* and they worship one or other of these persons in every part of India. And what proves that they hold this doctrine distinctly, is, that their most ancient representation of the Deity is formed of *one body and three faces.* Nor are these representations confined to India alone; but are to be found in other parts of the East. The Hindoos believe that one of the persons in their Trinity (and that too the second person), WAS MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH. Hence their fables of the *incarnations* of Vishnoo. And this doctrine of the incarnation of the Deity is found over almost the whole of Asia." From the testimony produced, it is clearly made out that the Divine Being appeared in the world, and dwelt in the flesh among men.

What was the object of this incarnation? becomes an important question. The text says it was *to give life* and *light to mankind.*

Moral life and *light* imply—1. A knowledge of the "true God." 2. A knowledge of the worship due him from us. 3. A knowledge of the *certainty* and *condition* of a future state of being. Let us attend to these things, as being the substance of the life and light which Christ came to impart to the world.

1. *He came to restore to the world the knowledge of the true God.*

It is very natural to suppose, from the first chapters of Genesis, that the knowledge of the true God was among the *first* families of the earth, and that his worship was observed by them. This supposition is confirmed by various passages of scripture. It is, however, very

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evident from the Scriptures, as well as from the history of the world, that the knowledge, fear, and worship of the true God quickly vanished from the earth, and men become idolatrous and corrupt.

In proof that the knowledge and worship of God were among the first inhabitants of the earth, reference may be made to Gen. iv. 3, 4. *Cain* and *Abel* were the first children born to Adam; and of them it is said, "In process of time Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, *an offering unto the Lord:* and Abel, *he also brought of the firstlings of his flock.*" It may also be clearly inferred, that Adam and Eve were in the habit of sacrificing animals to God, for a *sin-offering*, after their fall; from Gen. iii. 21, "Unto Adam also and his wife did the Lord God make coats of SKINS, and clothed them." Certainly of the skins of those animals which had been offered in sacrifice, as *death yet had not operated in the world by a decay of nature.*

The knowledge and worship of God continued but a short time among *all* the primitive families; for we read, Gen. iv. 26, "And to Seth, also, there was born a son; and he called his name Enos; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;" i. e. PROFANELY, as the passage is translated by eminent biblical scholars, and understood by the Jewish rabbins.

Thus we see, in the time of the immediate *grandson* of Adam, men *began* to be profane and irreligious. This explanation is confirmed by referring to the beginning of the sixth chapter of Genesis, where it is stated that "when men *began to multiply* on the face of the earth," their wickedness began. And about 1500 years from the creation, in the days of Noah, it is said, Gen. vi. 11, "The *earth* also was corrupt before God, and the earth was *filled with violence.*"

This departure from God *began* in the days of Enos, the grandson of Adam, and in the days of Noah (in the year of the world 1536) *it had filled up the measure of the earth's iniquity*, and induced the Divine Being to send the deluge, for the destruction of the wicked.

The same general view is given by the apostle Paul, Rom. i. 21, 23, "Because that, *when they knew God*, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; *but became vain in their imaginations*, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things. Who changed the truth into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

It was said, the Jewish doctors understood this subject in the same way. In proof; *Maimonides*, in his treatise on idolatry, says: "In the days of Enos, the sons of Adam erred with great error, and the

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counsel of the wise men of that age became brutish, and Enos himself was of them that erred, and their error was this: They said, forasmuch as God has created these stars and spheres to govern the world, and set them on high, and they are ministers that minister before him, it is meet that men should laud, and glorify, and give them honors. When this thing was come up in their hearts, they began to build temples unto the stars, and to offer sacrifice unto them, and to worship before them. *And this was the root of idolatry.* And this thing spread through all the world; so in process of time, the glorious and fearful name of God was forgotten out of the mouth of all living, and out of their knowledge; and they acknowledged him not," &c. See Dr. A. Clark, on Gen. v. 26.

Thus we have seen it is true of mankind in general, that they lost the knowledge of the true God. There were very few exceptions in any age or nation. The Jews, as a nation, though the chosen people of God, scarcely forms an actual exception. They were often and extensively idolatrous. The ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome were not proper exceptions; the opinions of Socrates, Plato, and Seneca, concerning the true God, were very crude and imperfect. The design of the incarnation of the Divine Being was, therefore, to bring mankind back to the knowledge and worship of the true God. And here, one is almost *compelled* to ask—What means so *reasonable* and so *efficient* in restoring the knowledge of the true God, as for himself to tabernacle among them in the flesh, that this *life* in him, as the text expresses it, "might be the light of men?"

Again: it is said, "He is the true light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,—Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," &c.

How successfully this design of the incarnation has been realized may be learned, by comparing the knowledge of the nations which have not the Scriptures with the knowledge of the nations which have, in regard to God. It is an incontestable fact, that while the former "grope in darkness, and have no light," the latter "walk in the light," having elevated and efficient views of the divine nature and character. Indeed, the knowledge of the true God is restored, at this time, to a large portion of the earth, and is diffusing itself still more rapidly and extensively. May "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," rise on all the world. Amen.

2. *A knowledge of the worship due the true God from us.* This would be *useless*, unless mankind had the *privilege* and *ability to perform* this worship. As a guilty, depraved, and *condemned* sinner, man had neither the privilege nor power to worship the true God. His guilt and condemnation deprived him of the *privilege* of worshipping God, and laid him under the obligation to *suffer*. But the same

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being could not be held responsible for *obedience*, and *punishment at the same time*, and by the *same* law. His depravity deprived him of the *ability* to worship the true God. Our Saviour, therefore, commences the restoration of man to the worship of the true God, by raising him to the privilege and power of worshipping God. In order to raise him to this privilege, he must be redeemed from under the curse of the law; and this redemption could be effected only by having the demands of the law answered, by the same nature that sinned, suffering death, which was the penalty due to the sinner. Hence the manifestation of God in the world, was *for the suffering of death*, in his humanity. So says the apostle: "He was made a little lower than the angels, FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH." In this manifestation for the suffering of death, he assumed the same nature which was condemned, by which alone *equal* satisfaction could be made. The apostle says, "*Forasmuch* as the *children* were partakers of flesh and blood, *he also took part of the same*; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

This transaction, constituting the *atonement*, was in behalf of the *world*, and by it the world is restored to the *privilege* of worshipping the true God, because redeemed from the curse of the law.

But the privilege of worshipping the true God would be of no advantage without an *ability* to do it. Owing to the *depravity* of mankind, to them the worship of God was *impracticable*; with the purchase of the *privilege* to worship God came the *promise* of sufficient means and aid. These means and aid are the Holy Spirit and grace of God, granted to the world through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Redemption being thus prepared for the world, and the means of profiting by it placed in the power of all, a restoration fully to the worship of the true God, implies *repentance* for the obtaining of pardon, and *obedience* for eternal life. These two points our Redeemer explained and insisted on. Indeed they were the ultimate and principal objects of his incarnation. The Scriptures say, "he is exalted a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins." And in the epitome of prayer, commonly called the Lord's prayer, which he gave his disciples, he expressly enjoins *obedience*, by directing them to say, "*Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.*" Indeed the text intimates, and other passages still more plainly, that the Divine Being became incarnate among men, to afford them a *proper example* by which they should walk, in order to please God. "In him was life, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN."

Thus we see he has restored to the world the worship of the true God, by purchasing for them the *privilege* and *ability* of worshipping God, and by instructing them how to avail themselves of these advantages.

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3. *A knowledge of the certainty and condition of a future state of being.*

The knowledge of the *certainty* of a future state is derived, in particular, by means of the incarnation of the Divine Being. Because, without his incarnation our Saviour never could have died, and, consequently, never could have risen. Of course, the world never could have had an instance of one coming again from the grave as "the first fruits of them that slept." The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was intended, and in the Scriptures is regarded, as a pledge of the resurrection of the world, and by consequence, as the apostle argues, a future and endless state of being. This is well expressed by Dr. Young:—

——And did he rise?
Hear, O ye nations, hear it, O ye dead!
He rose! he rose! he burst the bars of death
Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
And give the King of glory to come in.
Who is the King of glory? he who left
His throne of glory for the pang of death.
Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
And give the King of glory to come in.
Who is the King of glory? he who slew
The ravenous foe that gorged all human race.
The King of glory He, whose glory filled
Heaven with amazement at his love to man,
And with divine complacency beheld
Powers most illumined, wilder'd in the theme.
The theme, the joy, how then shall man sustain?
O the burst gates; crushed sting! demolished throne!
Last gasp of vanquished death! shout earth and heaven.
This sum of good to man, whose nature then
Took wing, and mounted with him from the tomb.
Then, then I rose! then first humanity
Triumphant passed the crystal ports of light,
(Stupendous guest!) and seized eternal youth,
Seized in our name. E'er since 'tis blasphemous
To call man mortal. Man's mortality
Was then transferred to death; and Heaven's duration
Unalienably sealed to this frail frame,
This child of dust!—Man, all immortal, hail!
Hail, heaven! All lavish of strange gifts to man!
Thine all the glory, man's the boundless bliss.

One of the prominent excellencies of revealed religion is, that "*life* and IMMORTALITY *are brought to light by the gospel.*" The world, unaided by revelation, has always had but conjectural and doubtful views of the immortality of the soul. A clear illustration and satisfactory proof of this great truth can only be found in revealed religion, founded on the incarnation of the Deity.

The passage just quoted may be rendered, *He hath illustrated life and incorruption by the gospel.* The doctrine of *immortality* and *eternal life* existed among the Jews as a *promise*, but the world had never seen a *practical illustration* of it. Our Lord Jesus *died*,

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and thus became a subject of the empire of death: he *rose again*, and thus *illustrated*, by an example, the *resurrection* of the dead: he took the *same human body* up to heaven, and it appears in the presence of God for us; and thus gave a practical illustration of a future state of endless duration. All this is well expressed by the poet:—

> "In his blest life
> I see the path, and in his death the price,
> And in his great ascent the proof supreme
> Of immortality."

In connection with the certainty of a future state of immortality, our Lord Jesus Christ illustrated the *condition* of that state; viz. *happy or miserable precisely in proportion as they were wicked or religious in this life*, which is a state of probation for this future state of immortality.

This doctrine of our future state being *relatively as our conduct in this*, or deriving its complexion and character from our actions here, runs through all the Scriptures; is found in the writings of the heathen moralists and philosophers; and seems quite reasonable.

First: It is found in the Scriptures. Job xxxiv. 11, "For the work of a man will he render unto him, and cause every man *to find according to his work.*" Isaiah iii. 10, 11, "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with them, *for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.* Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, *for the reward of his hands shall be given him.*" Matt. xvi. 27, "The Son of man shall come in his glory with his angels, and then shall he *reward every man according to his works.*" 2 Cor. v. 10, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; *that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*" Whole pages might be transcribed to the same purpose. Nothing can be clearer than that this doctrine is found in the Bible.

Secondly: It is found in the writings of the ancient heathen moralists and philosophers.

Many passages might be selected in proof of this point, and from various authors. The first selection shall be made from the *sixth book of the Æneid*, because it is allowed by critics that Virgil intends, by the story of the descent of his hero into hell, to explain the most prevalent and best supported views of the learned among the heathen, in regard to the condition of a future state. Indeed, the story may be said to be a fair epitome of the views of the ancient heathen world, on this subject.

It may be desirable to some to see the incomparable *original*, while all will be pleased with the translation.

> Hic locus est partes ubi se via findit in ambas:—
> Dextera, quæ Ditis magni sub mœnia tendit;

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Hâc iter Elysium nobis : at lævа malorum
Exercet pœnas, et ad impia Tartara mittit.
* * * * * * *

Respicit Æneas subitò, et sub rupe sinistrâ
Mœnia lata videt triplici circumdata muro,
Quæ rapidus flammis ambit torrentibus amnis
Tartareus Phlegethon, torquetque sonantia saxa.
Porta adversa, ingens, solidoque adamante columnæ ·
Vis ut nulla virûm, non ipsi exscindere ferro
Cœlicolæ valeant : Stat ferrea turris ad auras ;
Tisiphoneque sedens, pallâ succincta cruentâ,
Vestibulum exsomnis servat noctesque diesque.
Hinc exaudiri gemitus, et sæva sonare
Verbera · tum stridor ferri, tractæque catenæ.
* * * * * * *

Gnosius hæc Rhadamanthus habet durissima regna ;
Castigatque auditque dolos, subigitque fateri
Quæ quis apud superos, furto lætatus inani,
Distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem.
Continuò sontes ultrix accincta flagello
Tisiphone quatit insultans ; torvosque sinistrâ
Intentans angues, vocat agmina sæva sororum.
* * * * * * *

Non, mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,
Ferrea vox, omnes scelerum comprendere formas,
Omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina, possim.
* * * * * * *

His demùm exactis, perfecto munere divæ,
Devenêre locos lætos, et amœna vireta
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas.
Largior hîc campos æther et lumine vestit
Purpureo : Solemque suum, sua sidera, nôrunt.
Pars in gramineis exercent membra palæstris ;
Contendunt ludo, et fulvâ luctantur arenâ :
Pars pedibus plaudunt choreas, et carmina dicunt.
Necnon Threïcius longâ cum veste sacerdos
Obloquitur numeris septem discrimina vocum :
Jamque eadem digitis, jam pectine pulsat eburno.
Hîc genus antiquum Teucri, pulcherrima proles,
Magnanimi heroës, nati melioribus annis,
Ilusque, Assaracusque, et Trojæ Dardanus auctor.
Arma procul currusque virûm miratur inanes.
Stant terrâ defixæ hastæ, passimque soluti
Per campos pascuntur equi : quæ gratia currûm
Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repôstos.
Conspicit ecce alios dextrâ lævâque per herbam
Vescentes, lætumque choro Pæana canentes,
Inter odoratum lauri nemus : unde supernè
Plurimus Eridani per sylvam volvitur amnis.

TRANSLATION.

" 'Tis here in different paths the way divides :
The right to Pluto's golden palace guides :
The left, to that unhappy region tends,
Which to the depth of Tartarus descends—
The seat of night profound and punished fiends.
* * * * * * *

The hero, looking on the left, espied
A lofty tower, and strong on every side

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With treble walls, which Phlegethon surrounds,
Whose fiery flood the burning empire bounds:
And, pressed betwixt the rocks, the bellowing noise resounds.
Wide is the fronting gate, and raised on high
With adamantine columns, threats the sky.
Vain is the force of man, and heaven's as vain,
To crush the pillars which the pile sustain.
Sublime on these, a tow'r of steel is rear'd;
And dire Tisiphone there keeps the ward,
Girt in her sanguine gown, by night and day,
Observant of the souls that pass the downward way.
From hence are heard the groans of ghosts,—the pains
Of sounding lashes and of dragging chains.
* * * * * * *

These are the realms of unrelenting Fate;
And awful Rhadamanthus rules the state.
He hears and judges each committed crime;
Inquires into the manner, place and time.
The conscious wretch must all his acts reveal
(Loth to confess, unable to conceal),
From the first moment of his vital breath,
To his last hour of unrepenting death.
Straight o'er the guilty ghost, the Fury shakes
The sounding whip, and brandishes her snakes,
And the pale sinner, with her sisters, takes.
* * * * * * *

Had I a hundred mouths, a hundred tongues,
And throats of brass, inspired with iron lungs,
I could not half those horrid crimes repeat,
Nor half the punishments those crimes have met.
* * * * * * * *

These holy rites performed, they took their way,
Where long extended plains of pleasure lay.
The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,
With ether vested, and a purple sky—
The blissful seats of happy souls below:
Stars of their own, and their own suns they know
Their airy limbs in sports they exercise,
And on the green, contend the wrestler's prize
Some in heroic verse divinely sing:
Others in artful measures lead the ring.
The Thracian bard, surrounded by the rest,
There stands conspicuous in his flowing vest.
His flying fingers and harmonious quill,
Strike seven distinguished notes, and seven at once
Here found they Teucer's old heroic race,
Born, better times and happier years to grace,
Assaracus and Ilus here enjoy
Perpetual fame with him who founded Troy.
The chief beheld their chariots from afar,
Their shining arms and coursers trained to war.
Their lancers fixed in earth—their steeds around,
Free from their harness, graze the flowery ground.
The love of horses which they had, alive,
And care of chariots after death, survive.
Some cheerful souls were feasting on the plain;
Some did the song, and some the choir maintain,
Beneath a laurel shade, where mighty Po
Mounts up to woods above, and hides his head below."

DRYDEN

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In support of the proposition, *that the heathen philosophers and moralists believed that our situation in the world to come will be relatively as our conduct in this;* the above extracts affirm, 1st. That all who leave the world go in *one direction for some time.* This is the natural effect of death, and all go into eternity. 2d. That in progress *the common way divides into* TWO. 3d. That the *left hand road leads to Tartarus*, the *right to Elysium.* Thus evidently assigning two distinct places of abode for the dead. 4th. That Tartarus is the place where the *guilty ghosts* are punished for *unexpiated sins*, which they are forced to *confess circumstantially;* that Elysium is the place where the good enjoy the highest state of felicity of which the ancients could conceive. Thus the whole doctrine of the proposition is minutely confirmed by the quotation.

The same doctrine is stated in various places in Cicero's works. One extract will suffice, which shall be made from "Scipio's dream," near the end of the fourth volume of his works in 12 vols. London, 1820, under the revision of Dr. John Carey.

This piece, from which the extract is made, is a fragment from the sixth book concerning the republic. It represents P. Scipio Africanus *the younger* as paying a visit to king Massinissa, in Africa. The first evening after his arrival was spent in conversation, chiefly in regard to Scipio Africanus the elder, whom Massinissa tenderly loved, and greatly admired. When P. Scipio had retired to bed, and fallen into a profound sleep, in a dream Africanus appeared to him, and discoursed familiarly in regard to the nature of God, the solar system, and the future state of the good and patriotic. He intimates that the soul is of divine original, possibly he means (as some) an emanation from the Deity, that it can never die. That the body alone is mortal. That the wicked souls, when they leave their bodies, wander in darkness and uncertainty, lashed by pursuit and persecution, about the neighborhood of this earth. But the virtuous and patriotic souls go immediately to the world of light, brightness, and glory, which he represents as in the *milky way*, in the heavens, and there enjoy unmixed felicity. This is a brief view of the whole piece, and accords expressly with the proposition. But it will be pleasing to many to see an epitome of the whole, as it is found in the close of the original. A brief extract, therefore, is added:—

Cum pateat igitur, æternum id esse quod a se ipso movetur, quis est, qui hanc naturam, animis esse tributam neget? * * * * Hanc tu exerce in optimis rebus. Sunt autem optimæ curæ, de salute patriæ: quibus agitatus et exercitatus et animus velocius in hanc sedem et domum suam pervolabit: idque ocius faciet, si jam tuum, enim erit inclusus in corpore, eminebit foras, et ea, quæ extra erunt, contemplans, quam maxime se a corpore abstrahet. Namque eorum animi, qui se corporis voluptatibus obedientium, Deorum et hominum

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jura violaverunt, corporibus elapsi circum terram ipsam volutantur; nec hunc in locum, nisi multis exagitati sæculis, revertuntur. Ille discessit: ego somno solutus sum.

TRANSLATION.—"Since, therefore, it is plain that must be eternal which has the power of self-motion, who is there who denies that this quality is to be attributed to the soul? * * * * Do you, then (the apparition of Africanus speaks to P. Scipio), exercise this soul in the highest virtuous pursuits? But anxiety and concern for one's country are the highest virtuous objects. In which if the mind be engaged and exercised, it will arrive more quickly in this habitation and home of the blest: and that it may do this the more speedily, even now while in the body, let it dart forth, and, contemplating those things which are without (i. e. beyond the operation of the bodily senses), let it abstract itself as much as possible from the body. For the souls of those who have given themselves up to the pleasures of the body, and afforded themselves, as it were, slaves to its impulses, and have violated the laws of the gods and men, when they die are hurried around this earth, nor do they return to this place of blessedness until they have been persecuted cruelly, and vexed for many ages. He departed; and I awoke from sleep."

Here we perceive that the future condition of the soul was relatively as our conduct here, in the opinion of Cicero. Indeed this doctrine, with some modification, is found throughout antiquity:—hence we may infer—

Thirdly: This doctrine is perfectly reasonable. This position needs scarcely any proof. The general consent of all who have thought on it is a sufficient confirmation. It is true, of consequence, if our *present* state be a state of *probation*, which all admit. For there could be no probation, unless our actions, during its continuance, should give complexion and character to the condition of our existence after it expired.

It is said, in the proposition, that our future condition will be *precisely* as our conduct here. This will appear obviously, if it be admitted, that our future condition is influenced *at all* by our conduct in this life. Because, if it be influenced at all, it must be according to the unalterable principles of justice, giving to each as his works have been. It is, therefore, plain that there will be as many degrees of happiness in heaven as there were degrees of goodness in earth; and, *vice versa*, as many degrees of misery in hell as there were degrees of vice in the world.

What a field of thought and profit do these views open to the anxious mind. How powerfully must it be impressed, in view of this subject, with the importance of having our conduct well directed here. And in view of the amount of wickedness and misery the lost sinner will attain to in process of an endless existence, who does not tremble

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at the thought of being wicked! and how dearly he must buy pleasure at the expense of goodness! But, O, how must the heart dilate and exult at the thought of the amount of virtue and happiness, even the least saint shall attain as eternity revolves? But the thought, in its ultimate bearing, becomes too big, and the mind faints under the effort to conceive what may be the ultimate amount of his happiness and glory. "Ultimate," did I say! there is no *ultimation* to the bearing of this thought: eternally increasing in the acquisition of knowledge, glory, and goodness—and the Divine Being still unfolding to the largest and most aspiring intellect, new glories in creation, and new excellencies in himself. To give birth, certainty, and clearness to this glorious doctrine, our Saviour came into the world.

In conclusion, the attention may be directed to two points, rather as a matter of reference, than minute discussion.

1. *Notwithstanding the Divine Being appeared in the world, and dwelt among men in the flesh, as their Maker, light and life, yet such was their blindness and depravity,* AS A BODY, *that they knew not their Maker, nor comprehended the heavenly light.*

This statement, distinctly made in the text, and corroborated in every page of the Bible, is one of the most indubitable and astonishing proofs of the native enmity of the human heart to God. The past history and present condition of the world attest the melancholy fact. It is very natural to inquire why "the world knew him not," and "his own received him not." It could not be because the light was not sufficiently strong to be observed; nor that the evidence was too weak to produce conviction. Not at all: but because of the obstinate self-will of the hearts of those who reject him. As our Saviour said, "They would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "THIS THEN IS THE CONDEMNATION," says our Saviour. Let each one of us recollect, therefore, that if we fall, yea, fall into hell, we must refer our fall to our own disobedience to the heavenly light. And if we are so unfortunate as to be damned in hell, let us recollect that there we shall continually accuse ourselves, by proclaiming, *This is my condemnation: I loved darkness rather than light.* And in heaven, to the full vindication of the Divine Being, it will be said of the damned, *For their sakes he became poor, that they through his poverty might be made rich:*—BUT THEY WOULD NOT.

But though this be true of the multitude, yet there were those who received and obeyed the heavenly light. We may then refer,—

2. *To the fact, that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."*

Power, in any creature, always implies means by which it must be exercised, in order to be available. In the Creator, power is an

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inherent attribute. The means, then, by the use of which we become "sons of God," are,—

1. FAITH :—"believe on his name," verse 12. This is evidently implied in *receiving him*. This mean amounts to a requisition of the most reasonable and natural kind. Because we cannot conceive how we should take pleasure in being the sons of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, or in following him as an example, *unless we believed on him*. So true is it, as in all cases of duty, that the requisition is natural, as well as wholesome. From these considerations it will appear plainly that it is proper to declare, "he that believeth not shall be damned;" because *he could not be saved*. And it will appear equally clear, why it is declared, "he that believeth shall be saved;" because *he could not be damned*. In view of these things let us take every means to revive, increase and strengthen our faith.

2. THE NEW BIRTH :—"born of God," verse 13. The natural effect of this, will obviously appear to every one, to constitute the person a *child of God*. This condition, the power to attain which is given to those who receive him, is the happiest a mortal can attain to on earth. It is the surest evidence of the greatest love of God to the person. "Beloved, behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." Here let the good man pause, and contemplate the wonderful love of God, which made him "an heir of God, and a joint heir with our Lord Jesus Christ," from being a child of the devil.

Yet, notwithstanding this great moral elevation and privilege, it is not fully developed what we shall be in a future state of glorious being. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." This quotation accords with the previous doctrine in this discourse, i. e. we shall be gloriously happy, but the peculiar *constitution* and *details* of that happiness are not revealed. But this deficiency (if indeed it be a deficiency), is fully made up in the clear declaration, "*We shall be* LIKE HIM, *for we shall see him as he is.*" It is fair, therefore, to conclude, that the *constitution, condition and happiness* of the *glorified humanity* of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be the MODEL of the constitution, condition and happiness of *our future state*. How does this intelligence swell the heart with hope, with joy, with fear? With hope and joy, at the anticipation of attaining such a state of happiness and glory; with fear, at the thought of the possibility of our missing it. If we miss it, eternity itself cannot reveal our loss: but if we gain it, eternity will be equally unable to reveal the extent and glory of the prize.

It remains, therefore, to say, in view of the glorious doctrines of the text—in view of the fact, that the God of the whole earth came down to dwell among men, to redeem them, to impart unto them life

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and light, and the power to become the sons of God, whether we will receive him, or not? Let us think of his stupendous goodness and condescension: let us think of the overwhelming truth—*Our future state will be relatively as our conduct* here: let us think of the ineffable state of eternal happiness—and we will be,

"Bold to take up, firm to sustain the consecrated cross."

NOW, UNTO HIM THAT HATH LOVED US AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

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SERMON XX.

BY REV. GEORGE COLES,
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ON THE ADVANTAGES OF POSSESSING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

ROMANS, III. 1, 2.

WHAT ADVANTAGE, THEN, HATH THE JEW?—MUCH EVERY WAY: CHIEFLY, BECAUSE UNTO THEM WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES OF GOD.

IT is well observed by the late excellent Bishop Porteus, "that the book which we call THE BIBLE, although it is comprised in one volume, yet in fact comprehends a great number of different narratives and compositions, written at different times, by different persons, in different languages, and on different subjects. And taking the whole of the collection together, it is an unquestionable truth that there is no one book extant, in any language, or in any country, which can in any degree be compared with it, for antiquity, for authority, for the importance, the dignity, the variety, and the curiosity of the matter which it contains."*

"That a revelation of the mind and will of God, concerning man, is both possible, and probable, desirable and necessary, what rational being in the world will deny? The pretensions of Moses, as the servant, and Christ as the Master of Truth, rest on a great variety of evidences, which the limits of this discourse will not permit us to bring forward. It will be sufficient in this place to observe, that, if the fulfilment of prophecy; the working of miracles; and the conversion of man from sin to God;—if the strictest integrity of character in the penmen, joined with a willingness to endure the severest hardships, and even to suffer death itself, in support of the doctrines they delivered, and the facts they declared to be true;—if grandeur and purity of design, majesty and simplicity of style, and union and

* Lectures on the Gospel of St. Matthew.

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harmony of the different parts and of the whole;—if freedom from every thing derogatory to the perfections of an infinitely holy, just. and good Creator, and to the happiness of rational and immortal creatures;—if every thing calculated to promote glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will towards men;—in short, if the whole series of the Old and New Testament will evidently tend TO EXALT GOD AND TO HUMBLE MAN;—if these be proofs of a divine revelation, then the writings of the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures are THE ORACLES OF GOD. Let, therefore, Minos make the Cretans believe that he derived his laws from Jupiter; Lycurgus from Apollo; Numa from the goddess Egeria; Solon from Minerva; Zoroaster from Ahrimanes; and Pythagoras from an eagle, as the inspired messenger. Let the heathen world boast of their auguries, and Mohammed of his visions and his dove; the Christian may congratulate himself on being in possession of the oracles of God. This inestimable privilege called forth the gratitude of David. —"He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. Praise ye the Lord." (Psalms cxlvii. 19, 20.) And this was acknowledged by St. Paul, as the glory of the Jewish people, "unto them were committed the oracles of God.'"*

The apostle in the preceding chapters had proved Jews and Gentiles to be both under sin. In this he obviates an objection which might arise from this similarity of condition. "What advantage then hath the Jew, and what profit is there of circumcision?" The objection he thus answers;—"Much every way: *chiefly* because unto them were committed the oracles of God."

The *necessity* of such a complete system of divine truth as is contained in the oracles of God, will appear from the consideration that *human opinions* are *fallible* and *discordant*; that however *sincere* mankind may be, they are liable to *err*, and that *conscience*, *dreams*, *visions* and *heathen oracles* are in no wise to be depended upon. We shall do well, therefore, to turn away from these uncertain guides, to that "*sure word of prophecy, unto which we shall do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.*

In discoursing from the words of our text, we shall show,—

I. WHAT ARE MEANT BY THE "ORACLES OF GOD."

II. THE MISERABLE SITUATION OF THOSE WHO ARE DESTITUTE OF THEM.

III. THE GREAT ADVANTAGES OF POSSESSING THEM.

I. "*The word debir* (which our translation constantly renders

* Bishop Marsh's Sermon before the Bible Society.

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oracle) comes from *dabar*, which signifies TO SPEAK; because God, who dwelt between the cherubim of the ark, in the Mosaic tabernacle, declared his mind from thence, when he was consulted by the high priest with Urim and Thummim."*

Thus did God, during the Jewish theocracy, "speak unto the fathers," by the priests, as well as in other ways in after times "by the prophets."

It may not be unacceptable to the reader to see, in this place, some account of the *heathen oracles*, so famous in the history of the ancients.

"Oracle, among the heathen, was the *answer*, which the gods were supposed to give to those who consulted them upon any affair of importance. The credit of oracles was so great, that in all doubts and disputes their determinations were held sacred and inviolable; whence vast numbers flocked to them for advice; and no business of importance was undertaken, scarce any war waged, or peace concluded, or any new form of government instituted, without the advice and approbation of some oracle. The answers were given by the priest, or priestess, of the god who was consulted; and generally expressed in such dark and ambiguous phrases as might be easily wrested to prove the truth of the oracle, whatever was the event."

"The origin of the famous oracle at *Delphi* is said to have been as follows: A number of goats that were feeding on mount Parnassus, came near a place which had a deep and long perforation. The steam which issued from the hole seemed to inspire the goats, and they played and frisked about in such an uncommon manner, that the goat-herd was tempted to lean on the hole, and see what mysteries the place contained. He was immediately seized with a fit of enthusiasm, his expressions were wild and extravagant, and passed for prophecies. This circumstance was soon known about the country, and many experienced the same enthusiastic inspiration. The place was revered; a temple was erected to Apollo; and a city built, which became the most illustrious in Phocis. The influence of its oracle controlled the councils of states, directed the course of armies, and decided the fate of kingdoms. The ancient history of Greece is full of its energy, and early register of its authority. The circumjacent cities were the stewards and guardians of the god. Their deputies composed the famous Amphictyonic assembly which once *guided Greece*."†

This is the origin of that famous oracle at Delphi, which "basely deceived Crœsus; was bribed by Themistocles, and dictated by Alexander." Of others it has been said that "many of the priests

* Benson on 1 Kings vi. 23.
† Encyclopedia Imperial.

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themselves, upon examination, publicly confessed them to be impostures, and discovered the whole contrivance, and management of the deceit, which was entered upon record." These were the oracles of devils.—*See Watson's Theological Institutes, part first, page* 190.

By the "oracles of God" we are to understand all that system of truth and mercy which is contained in all the canonical books of Scripture, as made known by God to man; whether in the way of historical narrative, precept, prophecy, promise, parabolic discourse, or epistolary correspondence; all that God the Father hath *spoken* by his Word and Spirit, through the medium of prophets, evangelists and apostles.

These sacred writings are the sources of historical, political, moral, religious and eternal truth. If we would know any thing concerning *the creation and government of this world*, the oracles of God inform us—"Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hand." "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power, and by him all things consist." Here we have the true history of the creation and government of the world. Would we know what *political principles* these oracles inculcate, we have them in these words: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord; wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you—for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. Render to all their dues; honor to whom honor, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear." Would we know what is the *morality* of the Bible, we are to learn it, not in the *actions related*, but in the *precepts taught*. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Do thyself no harm. Be merciful. Love your enemies. Abstain from all appearance of evil." Here, in these sacred oracles, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, neighbors and friends, are all taught their respective duties, with a clearness and precision which all may understand and easily apprehend.

On the subject of *religious truth*, the oracles of God are equally clear. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave his life a ransom for all. Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

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Nor are the "oracles" of God less clear on the subject of *eternal truth*. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord. For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, *eternal* in the heavens. The hour is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

Not only are the oracles of God the oracles of *truth;* they are the oracles of *mercy* also. They consider man as a *fallen* creature, and have made provision for his *restoration*. They consider him as a *guilty* creature, and have provided for him a full and a free *pardon*. They consider him as a *captive* and a *slave*, "sold under sin," and point him to a *Redeemer*. Reconciliation to an offended God, adoption into his family, restoration to his image, and salvation "to the uttermost" are all promised in the oracles of God to the penitent and believing sons of men.

If any one should ask, "Wherein does the Bible appear to be just such a *revelation* as we might suppose God would bestow upon his creatures?" the answer is, In the sublimity of its doctrines;—the purity of its moral precepts;—the richness of its promises;—the grandeur and benevolence of its miracles;—the exact fulfilment of its predictions;—and its uniform design throughout.

But some will say, "I do not believe that God ever held colloquial intercourse with man." Not to say that "*I believe*," and "*I do not believe*," are not arguments, though such expressions are often offered in the place of argument, we may add in this place, as a strengthening of the argument in favor of the divine authenticity of the oracles of God, that when Korah and his company entered into a conspiracy against Moses and Aaron, (Numb. 16 chap.) the Lord gave such unquestionable proofs of the divine mission of Moses, and of the sacred order of the priesthood, as might for ever satisfy the doubts of all those who have any faith in history; "for these things were not done in a corner," neither did the evidences of them cease with the going down of the sun on that day. It is very remarkable that Moses, at that critical moment, was willing that the divinity of his mission should be tested by the strongest proofs that could be then given, by uttering a prediction which called for nothing less than a miracle to prove its truth. "If these men die the common death of all men," says Moses, "then the Lord hath not sent me." The event proved the truth of the prediction; for "it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, —and they perished from among the congregation." Among the

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many miracles, which it pleased God to perform by the ministration of Moses, there are few which more evidently prove the truth of the Jewish religion than this destruction of Korah and his seditious company. To give this prodigy its full force, we ought above all things to remark, that it happened not by chance, but that Moses predicted the punishment before it could possibly be known (otherwise than by immediate inspiration) that such an event would happen, for, while the earth was firm and entire, Moses announced the time when, the place where, the persons on whom, and the manner in which, this prodigy should happen; and the effect immediately followed the prediction, and was to the people of that generation an ocular demonstration that God had spoken to the people by his servants Moses and Aaron. The miracle of Aaron's rod that budded, blossomed, and bore fruit in one night, mentioned in the next chapter, is no less a proof of the divine interposition: and as long as it remained green, flourishing, and full of flowers and fruit, was a standing miracle, and a constant proof to the children of Israel, of the divine origin of their religion.

All the *miracles*, therefore, which attended the ministry of Moses, of Christ and of his apostles, and all the *prophecies*, which they uttered, which have been fulfilled, go to prove that the books of Holy Scriptures are the ORACLES OF GOD.

II. IT IS OUR BUSINESS, IN THE NEXT PLACE, TO SHOW THE MISERABLE SITUATION OF THOSE WHO ARE DESTITUTE OF THESE DIVINE ORACLES.

This might be shown in many instances, but for the present we shall confine ourselves to the following.

1. *Without these divine oracles our knowledge of the true God would have been scanty and incorrect.*

The light of nature shines but dimly on this highly interesting subject, and "*reason's glimmering ray*" is insufficient to render visible to our minds many of the attributes of the Godhead. Philosophy is equally insufficient to bear us on its pinions to the throne of him, who dwells in unapproached light. Without these divine guides, which are as "a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path," we should have been like unto a company of travellers in a dreary wilderness; every one of us would have "turned to his own way," or we should have gone on, confounded and bewildered, until, "in endless mazes lost," we had been for ever beyond the reach of recovery.

2. *The origin of this world would have remained an impenetrable secret, had it not been for the oracles of God;—and the theories of naturalists would have been as numerous and discordant as the doctrines of the ancient philosophers concerning the divine nature.*

The following extracts from Cuvier's "Theory of the Earth,"

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prove the truth of the apostle's words, "THEY BECAME VAIN IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS," even on this subject also. "Leibnitz and Descartes imagined this world to be an extinguished sun, or vitrified globe; upon which the vapors condensing, in proportion as it cooled, formed the seas, and afterwards deposited calcareous strata." "Demailett supposed the globe to have been covered with water for many thousands of years. He supposed that this water had gradually retired; that all the terrestial animals were originally inhabitants of the sea, that man himself began his career as a fish; and he asserts that it is not uncommon, even now to meet with fishes in the ocean which are half men, and whose descendants will in time become perfect human beings." On the subject of creation, then, we may safely assert, of all those who have either not been favored with the oracles of God, or who have "despised his instructions," that they were either grossly ignorant in this matter, or, "professing themselves wise, they became fools."

3. *The same awful darkness lies upon the subject of the origin of man, where the light of divine revelation has not shined.**

Indeed, all that is peculiar to man, his morally depraved condition, his thirst for immortality, his present misery and his future hopes, are subjects so fraught with difficulties, that, were it not for the help of divine revelation, we could never account for the ten thousand facts in relation to these subjects which are continually staring us in the face. To mention only one for instance. Who, without the oracles of God, can answer this question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No; the resurrection of the dead is purely a doctrine of revelation. To the "lively oracles" we are indebted for our hopes of immortality, and they who are so unhappy as to be without the light which those oracles afford, "are of all men most miserable."

4. *Without the sacred oracles of divine truth, we should not know whom or what to worship; whether an invisible Deity, a departed hero, a serpent or a star.*

* "Anaximander, an ancient philosopher, tells us that the first men and all animals were bred in a warm moisture, inclosed in crustaceous skins, like crab-fish or lobsters; and that when they arrived at a proper age, their shelly prisons growing dry, broke, and made way for their liberty."—"Empedocles informs us, that mother Earth at first brought forth a vast number of legs, and arms, and heads &c., which, approaching each other, arranging themselves properly, and, being cemented together, started up at once full grown men."—"Another of these philosophers relates that there first grew up a sort of uterus, which, having its roots in the earth, attracted thence a kind of milk for the nourishment of the fœtus, which in process of time broke through the membrane and shifted for itself; whilst the Egyptian fathers of this hopeful school contented themselves with simply affirming that animals, like vegetables, sprung at first from the bosom of the earth. Surely those sages, or their followers, should have been able to tell us why the earth has not in any climate this prolific power of putting forth vegetable men at present. Encyc. Imp. Art. Nat. Theology.

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The claims of imaginary gods are as numerous and as opposite as their natures; and poor miserable man, amidst the claims of conflicting divinities, is left without hope in the world. But if, without the light of divine truth, we could know *whom* to worship, still we should not know *how* to worship him. If we could rise above the Athenians of old, and should inscribe on our altars "TO THE KNOWN GOD," yet who shall tell us *how* to worship him? Supposing I am so vain as to think that by the "light of nature" I have found out the Almighty to perfection, yet "wherewith shall I come before him?—shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" These are awful and serious questions, which no book but the book of God can answer.

5. *Without this guide, we know not before whom to unbosom our sorrows,—in whom to trust,—nor where to look for relief in the hour of affliction and death.* With the worshippers of Baal, indeed, we might pray, "O Baal, hear us," *and with the like success;* but none, except the Lord God of Elijah, will hear us when we pray in secret, and reward us openly.

6. *We might, perhaps, by mere reasoning, come to the conclusion that there is* A GOD, *but his laws we could never have known if he had not spoken "unto the fathers by the prophets, and in these last days unto us by his Son."* Neither could we have known the *penalties* and the *rewards* consequent upon a neglect or an observance of those laws; so that, without a promulgation of the laws of God, with the penalties and the rewards annexed, our life would have hung continually in doubt; we should not have known what to do, nor what to leave undone. But now that it is written, "Blessed are they that do his commandments (and we know what those commandments are), that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city," we may well say, that they, who are so happy as to possess the oracles of God, have every thing they need, whilst those, who are so miserable as to want them, want every thing with them.

7. *And as to* TRUTH, *there is no standard, either in history, politics, morals, religion, or in regard to the things of eternity, on which we can safely depend, but the unerring word of God, and those writings that accord therewith.* But for this sacred guide, the whole family of mankind had been like a ship's company, far out at sea, exposed to adverse winds, and contrary currents, without captain, chart or compass, liable to be dashed on the rugged rock, or ingulfed in the ocean for ever.

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III. LET US NOW SURVEY THE GREAT ADVANTAGE OF POSSESSING THE SACRED ORACLES.

1. *As a means of acquiring divine knowledge.* There is a knowledge that "puffeth up," and there is a knowledge that will "vanish away;" and however useful these may be to the possessor, *that* must be more useful, which maketh a man humble, and which endureth for ever. Now where shall we go, in order to attain this knowledge? The learned and pious Dr. WATTS, in his "Improvement of the Mind," has laid down five eminent methods of attaining useful knowledge, among which are *reading* and *meditation*. Now the question is, "What books shall we read, and on what subjects shall we meditate?" for it is well known that books are, like the writers of books, *good* and *evil*, and may corrupt as well as reform those who have to do with them. Therefore it is not less dangerous to set a youth with money in his pocket, loose, and at large, in a great city, than to set a man with the power of reading, loose upon the great republic of letters. By reason of the new power he hath acquired, he needeth a new discretion in using it—*the tree of knowledge still bearing good and evil fruit.* The oracles of God, therefore, are the only safe guide in the pursuit of divine knowledge. David, the sweet singer of Israel, was so sensible of this, that in rapture he exclaimed, "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Ps. cxix. 97—100.

2. *As a means of acquiring true wisdom.*

As there are different kinds of *knowledge*, so also there are different kinds of *wisdom*. There is the wisdom which is from beneath, which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish;" and there is the wisdom which is from above, which is heavenly in its origin, pure, peaceable and gentle in its nature, and in its operations free from guile, and full of mercy. "Wisdom," says one, "is the power of judging rightly." Another says, "it is that which makes men judge what are the best ends, and what are the best means to attain them." But how shall a man "judge rightly," in the science of *religion*, which of all other sciences is the most important, unless he has a true standard by which to judge? The conduct of the ancient Athenians is a sad proof of the deficiency of human wisdom, in matters of religion. For they neither knew God, nor did they know how to worship him. Acts xvii. 23—30. But give a man the oracles of God, and he soon learns that "God is a Spirit, and that they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24. And how are men to judge what are the best ends without these guides? It is true, that by common consent, *happiness* is judged to be worthy the

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pursuit of all. But the question returns, which is best, *sensual*, *intellectual*, or *spiritual*; that of a mere animal, a philosopher, or a Christian? The oracles of God decide the question,—"Unto them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, ETERNAL LIFE." Rom. ii. 7. These holy writings point to heaven as the ultimate end of man, and direct him to the practice of virtue and holiness as the best means of attaining that end. These are the books which make a man WISE unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

3. *As furnishing us with the means of obtaining pardon, and of acquiring holiness and happiness in the present life, and of pointing out to us the way that leads to life eternal.*

That man is a *guilty* as well as a *miserable* being, needs no proof. It is demonstrable, that a great part of our misery in the present life, and all our fears respecting the life to come, arise from conscious guilt. For, though an innocent creature may suffer, yet what has he to fear from a just and righteous God? Conscious innocence will always inspire its possessor with consolation for the present, and hope for the future.

> "And more true joy Marcellus *exiled* feels,
> Than Cæsar with a *senate* at his heels."

But man, in reference to his Maker, is a *guilty* creature. He *needs pardon;* and none but the oracles of God can direct him where to go to find this "pearl of great price." Man is also a *polluted* being. He is unholy; and a painful consciousness of this makes him unhappy. But whither shall he go for relief? The "rivers of Damascus" will not cleanse him, nor the sacred waters of the Ganges make him pure. No—

> "Nor all the blood of beasts,
> On Jewish altars slain,
> Can give his guilty conscience peace,
> Or take away its stain."

Nor can philosophy help us out here; for philosophers themselves, as Halyburton saith, are but like weak watermen on a strong stream, aiming to row one way, but are carried another. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" 1 John i. 8, 9. Man is a *miserable* being. His fears of the future make him miserable. How may these soul-rending fears be taken away, and he be filled with a joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory? The oracles of God inform him. They point him to One, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus

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Christ:—and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The soul that is reconciled to God, through the blood of the Lamb, that lives by faith on the Son of God, and is filled with love divine, has nothing to fear. And thus it is that the oracles of God furnish us with the means of pardon, holiness and happiness in the present life, whilst they fail not to point us to those eternal realities beyond the grave, where there is "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

4. *The great advantages to be derived from a possession of the oracles of God may be learned from the history of nations.*

Why, at this time, is the little island of England of more importance than Borneo, Madagascar, or New Holland? Why shines t light of literature and of science there, and not in other regions, equal salubrious in their climate and fertile in their soil? Why, for mor than a thousand years the one has had the oracles of God, and the Christian religion, and the others have not. The eloquent Irving's remarks concerning Scotland are worthy of being repeated here. "Her soil niggard, her climate stern, a desert land of misty lakes and hoary mountains. Yet, no sooner did the breath of truth from *the living oracles of God* breathe over her, than the wilderness and the solitary place became glad, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed like the rose:—religious principles chose to reside in the land; and they brought moral virtues in their train, and begot a national character for knowledge and industry and enterprise, for every domestic and public virtue, which maketh her children ever an acceptable people in the four quarters of the earth." *Orations, p.* 192, 8*vo. edition.*

The same author's remarks concerning the effect of the preaching of the divine word, among the lower classes in England, are also worthy of especial notice. "And if there remain any one so unreasonable, as still to misgive of its prevailing equally against the abounding ignorance and iniquity of the lower classes, I have the very fact to appeal to, the successful experiment in the hands of the Wesleyan Methodists. They have grappled with the most irreducible case of the problem, and fairly resolved it. Not in England—perhaps not in the wide world, was there a more ignorant, dissipated and ferocious people, than the colliers of the West and North, to whom the Wesleyans addressed the gospel of Christ with the most distinguished success; in every case working a reformation upon every individual who joined himself to their communion."

Finally—Let me ask once more, What is it that makes the character of the people of these United States to differ so widely, and so advantageously from that of the inhabitants of the old continents?

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Have we had more time to frame and remodel our laws? Have we had longer experience in the management of our civil, literary and religious institutions, or more time, since we became a nation, to devise, mature and digest our plans? Nay verily, for it is not a century since we became an independent people. The founders of our republic have but just descended to the tomo, and our institutions have but just begun to flourish. All our greatness, and all our glory, arise from our acquaintance with the character and claims of our Maker, through the medium of the divine word, and our living answerable to those claims. Our fathers brought with them the word of life. This is the tree they planted in the place of that ignorance and superstition which had spread itself from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This sacred tree of life and liberty has taken deep root, and has filled this part of the earth with its fruit. This is the book of books. It furnishes lessons for the nursery, maxims for the school boy, apothegms for the student, rich lore for the scholar, correct data for the historian and chronologer, relics for the antiquarian, themes for the poet, songs for the musician, and texts for the divine. While these holy writings are read in our schools, our closets, our families, and our sanctuaries; and the spirit of those holy laws, which God has given to the sons of men, incorporates itself in our national code, we may rest assured that the Lord will be our defence, and we shall be unto him a peculiar people, as was Israel in the days of old. Foreign nations may ask, 'What advantage then hath the American?' And infidels may inquire, 'What profit is there in Christianity?' Nay, even the papists may ask, if they choose, 'What profit is there in Protestantism?' Our answer is that of the apostle in our text,—"Much every way;" but chiefly, because we have the ORACLES OF GOD. MAY WE EVER VALUE AND ALWAYS KEEP THE SACRED TREASURE. AMEN.

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SERMON XXI.

BY REV. NOAH LEVINGS,
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

Delivered at the opening of the new Methodist Episcopal Church in Mount Pleasant, N. Y., August 22, 1830.

THE STONE WITH SEVEN EYES.

ZECHARIAH iii. 9, 10.

FOR BEHOLD THE STONE THAT I HAVE LAID BEFORE JOSHUA; UPON ONE STONE SHALL BE SEVEN EYES: BEHOLD I WILL ENGRAVE THE GRAVING THEREOF, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, AND I WILL REMOVE THE INIQUITY OF THAT LAND IN ONE DAY. IN THAT DAY, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, SHALL YE CALL EVERY MAN HIS NEIGHBOR, UNDER THE VINE AND UNDER THE FIG TREE.

NUMEROUS are the places in the writings of the Old Testament where the glorious plan of salvation, through Jesus Christ, is brought to view. Some of these passages are uttered in the most sublime language, and so clear as not to be misunderstood, without great and manifest perversion. The language is often metaphorical, nevertheless the sense is plain; and with the key of the four evangelists in our hand, every difficulty in relation to the Messiahship of Christ vanishes, and our faith accumulates strength at every step of the investigation. The prophet Zechariah, for the length of his prophecy, has rather more than a usual number of allusions to Christ. Among these is the one contained in the passage before us. The language is metaphorical, and derived from the arts of architecture and engraving. This, however, is in perfect accordance with the practice of the eastern nations, almost all of whose ideas were communicated by allusions to the visible and sensible objects around them, and by the existing customs and arts of society. There is, also, no doubt, a

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reference to the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the temple, which was done in the presence of the high-priest, with great solemnity.

Happy will it be for us, my brethren, if, in the prosecution of this subject, we shall discover our adorable Advocate, effecting the salvation of a ruined world, and producing the happiest effects upon human society. That it may be even so, let us lift up our hearts to the Father of mercies, that we may be divinely assisted both in speaking and in hearing; and that the "word of God may have free course and be glorified."

In noticing this subject we shall consider—

I. THE STONE WITH SEVEN EYES.
II. THE WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.
III. THE EFFECTS WHICH FOLLOW.

I. THE STONE WITH SEVEN EYES.

It is generally allowed that this refers directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some, however, understand it of Zerubbabel. But if it be allowed to refer to him primarily, yet only as a type of Christ; for it is the same person who is styled "THE BRANCH" in the preceding verse, in chapter vi. 12, and in other places where Christ is undoubtedly intended.

1. *There are numerous allusions to Christ under the metaphor of a stone.*

God saith to Moses, "Behold I will stand before thee there, upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." Exod. xvii. 6. Here Christ and him crucified were most evidently presented to the faith of the ancient Hebrews. This is fully confirmed by the words of an inspired apostle—"And did all drink of the same spiritual drink; (for they drank of that spiritual *rock* that followed them; *and that rock was Christ.*)" 1 Cor. x. 4. Here he is presented as the satisfying portion of his people, and the fountain of all their joys. In Psalms cxviii. 22, David saith, "The *stone* which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner;"—and Jesus Christ claims to be the person here referred to. Thus, in Matt. xxi. 42, he says to the "chief priests and elders of the people," "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" These are also confirmed by the words of St. Paul, Eph. ii. 20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*" In Isaiah viii. 14, he is described as "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both houses of Israel;

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and in Rom. ix. 32, 33, the apostle says, "For they" (the Jews) "stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence." And St. Peter bears testimony to the same fact where he says, "Unto you, therefore, who believe he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient." 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. In Isaiah xxviii. 16, the prophet cries out, "Behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation, and he that believeth shall not make haste." These words, by an inspired apostle (1 Pet. ii. 6.), are applied to Jesus Christ, who is indeed precious unto all that believe. In the prophecy of Daniel, he is also recognized as the "stone cut out without hands, and which filled the whole earth." In all these passages, as also in the text, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth as the foundation of the church, and the never-failing source of his people's consolation.

2. *Upon this stone were to be seven eyes.*

Seven appears to have been a sacred number among the Jews, and one denoting perfection. Hence we read of the "*seven* churches," —the "*seven* golden candlesticks"—"the Lamb with *seven* horns and *seven* eyes"—the "*seven* Spirits of God"—the "book with *seven* seals"—the "*seven* lamps"—the "*seven* phials"—and here, of the "stone with *seven* eyes."

Eyes are explained by commentators to signify intelligence and wisdom. Eyes of *the Lord*, are to be understood of his omniscience. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth *all* his goings." Prov. v. 21. "The eyes of the Lord are in *every place*, beholding the evil and the good." chap. xv. 3. "He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Psa. xciv. 9. All that is expressed by the terms wisdom and knowledge, is also to be understood by this metaphor. Now as seven in the Scriptures denotes perfection, we are doubtless, by the expression in this place, to understand that the attributes or qualities signified by it, are infinitely perfect, forasmuch as they are ascribed to God. It is then, at least, an exhibition of one of the attributes of the infinite Jehovah. Let this be borne in mind, for we shall soon see Jesus Christ possessing this attribute.

3. *By these eyes "being upon this stone," some suppose that we are to understand the eyes of the Father beholding the Son.*

But may we not rather suppose that the seven eyes being *upon* the stone, were designed to signify that the perfections represented by them should be imparted to, and become identified with it? And may not this be what is intended by the expression, "I will *engrave* the *graving* thereof, saith the Lord of hosts?" And may we not then suppose that this is an exhibition, by a most beautiful figure, of

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the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ? The engraver was "the Lord of hosts." And says John, "The word was *made* flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John i. 14. "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke i. 35. —"*Made* of a woman." Gal. iv. 4. See also Heb. ii. 14. I am not alone in this application of this metaphor; for Mr. Canne, in his references, from the words "I will engrave," refers directly to John i. 14. The things engraved on this stone were the infinite perfections of the Godhead. "God was manifested in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*." Col. ii. 9. Christ when on earth claimed these perfections, and the glory of them; for "being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be *equal with God*;" and claimed "that all men should honor the Son, even *as they honor the Father*." This incarnation of Christ, however, was but preparatory for—

II. THE WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.—"*I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.*"

The whole stupendous work of human redemption centres in one single point;—it was effected by one single act, and that act the work of one single day. The point in which all human hope centres, is the merit of Christ's death. The one act which secures it is the sacrificial offering of himself. The day on which it was effected was the day on which Christ suffered, "the just for the unjust." Whatever, therefore, was said by way of promise, whatever was revealed by prophecy, or whatever was exhibited by the rites of the Jewish economy, all pointed to, and centred in the death of Christ. On that day promises were fulfilled which had been standing on record for ages —prophecies were accomplished which had been standing for many generations. Both the necessity and the propriety of the sacrifices of the law ceased together in one day. Whatever was done, even by Christ himself, in obedience to the *preceptive* parts of the divine law, was only preparatory for the great work of the atonement, but was not the atonement itself, this consisting alone in his *death*. Hence, saith the apostle, "We have redemption through his *blood*." "In that he died, he died unto sin *once*. For this he did *once* when he offered up himself." "He entered in *once* into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "But now *once* in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many." "By the which will, we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once* for all." "For by *one* offering he hath perfected for ever them who are

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sanctified." So true is it, that the whole scheme of human redemption was consummated by the one offering of Christ upon the CROSS!

However, therefore, iniquity may have been removed by pardon, and a progressive work of grace in the hearts of thousands, and this at ten thousand different periods in the history of man; and however the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting after death, are blessings yet to be enjoyed in the future; yet all, all depend, for their meritorious cause, upon the work of one day! O my soul, what a day of interest was that to the world! We have heard of a day on which a world was involved in the waters of a flood. We have heard of a day on which whole cities were reduced to heaps of smoking ruins. We have heard of a day on which one decisive battle determined the fate of empires: yea, and we have heard of a day on which the tyrannical yoke of foreign usurpation was broken, and the sweet sound of liberty heard throughout this vast republic. But what are all these in comparison of that day when all heaven, in breathless silence, paused, and with an interest commensurate with the importance of the work, beheld the achievement of "the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel;" who, amidst the darkness that shrouded the heavens, and the trembling which shook all nature to her centre, "cried with a loud voice, IT IS FINISHED!"

Then the malicious enemy of God and man was taken captive, and chained to the triumphal chariot of the Redeemer. Then the obstacle which lay athwart the path of our salvation was removed, and all heaven joined with the earth to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." Then, seizing our nature from the tomb, he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and giving gifts unto men. But—

III. THE EFFECTS WHICH FOLLOW.—"*In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree.*" Here is, then,—

1. *A spirit of general benevolence.*

This is a legitimate fruit, or one of the effects of the great atonement applied to the heart of man. The first step towards the restoration of society to proper principles of feeling and action, is to remove that principle which first disorganized society, and which still promotes enmity and separation between man and man. Man was originally formed for society. Hence it was early said, "It is not good for man to be alone." But in the original formation of human society, principles were implanted in the breast of each individual, which were directly calculated to promote peace, order, and happiness. But, sin entering in, corrupted the whole fountain of moral feeling, poisoned all the streams of human happiness, broke every bond of friendship, and so

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cursed the human kind, that even solitude itself was preferable to the society of man. This state of things was seen and deplored by the wisest men of antiquity; yea, it was felt by all; but how to remove the evil was a problem which the world by wisdom could not solve. At length, when all the resources of philosophy and human wisdom were expended to no purpose, Jesus appeared, and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It pleased God, "by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

The removal of the guilt of sin by pardon, and the renewal of man's nature by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, are blessings which are to be received by faith in the atoning merit of Christ's death, and in answer to fervent, importunate prayer. Wherever these effects are produced upon the heart, the enmity thereof is totally destroyed, and a new fountain of moral feeling opened in the soul both towards God and man; God is loved supremely, man "with a pure heart fervently." As love is the ruling principle of the soul, all sordid views and selfish interests are excluded from the heart of the Christian, and he looks abroad upon all mankind with a heart flowing with benevolence. He rejoices in the prosperity of the prosperous, and tenderly sympathizes with those who are in adversity. In a word, he has learned to call every man his neighbor. But wherever this principle is found in the heart, it cannot remain inactive. This is contrary to its very nature. Every metaphor by which it is set forth and illustrated in the word of God, clearly marks this distinctive feature of it. Why is it compared to leaven, but because of its active operation in assimilating the whole mass into its own nature? Hence—

2. *A spirit of association.*

It is not enough for the true Christian, that he has peace, order, and happiness within the sanctuary of his own breast, nor yet that he feels a spirit of general benevolence towards all mankind. The language of his heart is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" The principle of which he is possessed, and by which he is actuated, ever prompts him to "every good word and work." The middle wall of sin being thrown down, he no longer desires to remain a stranger to his fellow man, or count him as an enemy. Hence he calls him to an association of friendship. "In that day shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree."

Eating together was by the ancients considered a mark of peculiar respect. It was a ceremony used not only as a testimony of mutual friendship, but also for the confirmation of covenants, in the transaction of civil and religious affairs. The place chosen and sanctioned by custom, for these purposes, was the shade of the vine and of the fig tree. The fruit of these was much depended upon both for nourishnent and comfort. Beneath their shade, therefore, was an appro-

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priate place for the interchange of friendships, and especially for the purposes of devotion. When, therefore, any one invited his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree, it was a testimony of his love, and the expression of a desire that his neighbor might with him partake of all the temporal and spiritual blessings of which he himself was a partaker. But viewing these expressions in their more immediate reference to the effects of the great atonement, they very clearly designate the spirit by which every true Christian is actuated towards mankind. A spirit which not only leads Christians to associate with, and "speak often to each other," but also to invite every man his neighbor to the same association, and to the participation of the same blessings. These blessings, next to pardon and peace with God, are the increase and diffusion of Christian knowledge, the mutual confirmation of each other's faith, and the enlargement of the circle of human happiness. Every Christian desires these next to the glory of God and his own salvation. His language is, therefore, to every sinner, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. If thou go with us, what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

It was this spirit, in all its infinite perfection and fulness, which moved the Father to "give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." It was the same love that moved the Son to "give himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity," and that he might "break down the middle wall of partition," which separated man from God, and man from man; "and in himself of twain to make one new man, so making peace." It is the existence and operation of this spirit, in the hearts of the ministers of Christ, which stimulates them to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"—to invite and entreat sinners to "be reconciled to God." It is the existence and operation of this spirit, which leads Christians to unite their efforts and put forth their energies in the cause of man. The association of Christians, not only in church fellowship, but also in the formation of Bible, missionary, Sunday school, tract, and temperance societies, is all owing to the same blessed cause. These societies, under the fostering care of the church of God, if they be conducted prudently, and with a single eye to his glory, are destined to evangelize the whole world, and usher in the latter day glory of the church. A voice sounds from each of them, whose accents are peace and unity. The pulsations given to Christian benevolence by the dying groan of Jesus, will, through these and other means, roll on with a steady tide of successful operation, till they reach and bless the latest posterity. They shall be limited only by the bounds o human existence, and their duration shall last to the latest hour o time.

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Improvement.

From this subject we learn—

1. *That the Christian hath a strong foundation for his faith.* In the first part of this subject, we have seen that Jesus Christ, by both prophets and apostles, is laid in Zion for a "sure foundation." He, therefore, who believes in him with a heart unto righteousness, shall not be confounded. The grounds of faith become still more enlarged and permanent, when we consider that this foundation is no less than the Rock of ages. In other words, that it is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "He is the Rock, his work is perfect." Though he was man, yet he possessed all the perfections of the "Godhead bodily." That this doctrine is mysterious, we are neither disposed to doubt or deny; but that it is clearly revealed in the word of God, we both believe and affirm. The attributes of the Deity were exercised by Jesus Christ when on earth, and he claimed the glory of them. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be *equal with God*, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here, O Christian, is the foundation of thy faith—a foundation which no pressure can possibly shake. "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing; let them shout from the tops of the mountains."

> "The dwellers on the rocks, and in the vale
> Shout to each other; and the mountain tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
> Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round!"

2. *We learn from this subject the great privilege of the children of God.*

Whatever obstacle lay in the way of our salvation, on account of original sin, was "removed in one day" by the death of Christ. The same death hath so atoned for actual transgression, that every soul of man, during his day of merciful visitation, may obtain pardon of sin, and acceptance with God. And the same blood which hath thus atoned for sin, is a standing fountain for all moral pollution. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." This is a principa. part of the "purchased possession" of every believer in Christ—to be made holy in heart, in life, and in all manner of conversation. And to effect this glorious work, the Holy Ghost is given. His office is not only to "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment," but also, and especially, to "comfort" the disciples of Christ, to "bring all things to their remembrance," and to "take of the things of Christ and show them unto them." Let every follower of Christ, then, look for the fulfilment of the promise—"I will

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sprinkle you with clean water, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Let him "ask and receive, that his joy may be full."

Let all who for the promise wait,
The Holy Ghost receive."

3. *Finally, we learn from this subject the duty of every Christian.*

Was it said that in the day when iniquity should be removed, "every" (Christian) "man should call his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree?" This prophecy, then, clearly points out the duty of every lover of Christ. Think not that this duty belongs exclusively to the ministers of the gospel; for though it does especially devolve upon them, yet not so as to supersede the necessity of the concurrent efforts of other Christians, or so as to justify their neglect of duty to the souls of men. The *manner* of the duty may not be the same, yet the duty itself is not, on this account, to be left undone. Every soul hath a duty to perform in relation to others. Hence, said Christ, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The duty devolving upon every Christian is, to call every man his neighbor from the ways of sin, folly and death, to an association of love, peace, and happiness—"to turn him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Now every Christian is bound to use every effort to be the instrument of accomplishing this great work. He is bound by all the love the Father has shown in the gift of his Son; and by all the love the Son hath shown in the gift of himself to die the death of the cross; yea, by all the mercy shown to him in the pardon of his own sins, and in the salvation of his own soul. He is bound by all the kindred interests of his relative condition, to do what he can to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins. *Finally:* he is bound by all the happiness accruing from the communion of saints on earth, and by all he hopes for in the kingdom of heaven. Without a faithful performance of these duties, he can neither show his love to Christ, nor manifest a becom ing zeal for his glory. Nor do we want means—these are abundant. The present is a day of Christian enterprise, without a parallel except in the days of the apostles. Institutions are rising up on every hand, which have for their object the salvation of men. Nor do we want opportunity; calls are heard from every quarter, "Come over and help us." If, then, we have money to invest, here it may be put to good use, and with good security; "for God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have administered to his saints." Churches need to be built; Bible, missionary, Sunday school, and

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tract treasuries need replenishing. If we have talents to use, here they may be employed to good advantage. Ignorance is to be removed, sinners warned, and poor wandering souls guided into the fold of Christ. Every possible means should be put in requisition without delay. We have no time to lose. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave whither thou goest." "WORK WHILE THE DAY LASTS, FOR THE NIGHT COMETH IN WHICH NO MAN CAN WORK." AMEN.

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SERMON XXII.

BY REV. LABAN CLARK,
PRESIDING ELDER ON NEW HAVEN DISTRICT.

Preached in New Bedford, Mass., May, 1830, before the New England Conference, and published by their request.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE ATONEMENT.

TITUS II. 14.

WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.

THE passage we have before us stands connected with the preceding verses, in which reasons are offered why the moral and relative duties of Christianity should be enforced upon all men, and upon persons in all stations and conditions in life; upon the aged and the young; husbands and wives; masters and servants; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. The reasons are drawn from the universal benevolence of Christ, and the gracious provision he has made for the instruction of all men in righteousness, not only in the commission given to his ministers, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; but by the immediate influence of his Holy Spirit: "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." And to encourage all in the practice of piety and holy living, they are directed to continue "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. In this verse, which we have chosen for our text, the

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apostle brings the atoning sacrifice of Christ into view, as the procuring cause of our redemption, together with its benevolent and gracious design.

Let us then take into consideration,—

I. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

But before we can have adequate views of the atonement, it will be necessary to consider,

1. *Who it was that gave himself for us.*

It is only in proportion as we have right views of the person and character of the Saviour, that we can have just views of the atonement he has made. I believe all who deny the essential deity and Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, also deny, either directly or consequently, the merit of his death, as a vicarious offering and sacrifice for sin. The evidences of the divine nature of our Saviour Jesus Christ do not rest upon the mere speculations of a vain philosophy, but upon an express revelation as given in the word of God, in which he is styled, "God with us,"—"God over all, blessed for ever,"—"God our Saviour,"—"The great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ,"—"The true God and eternal life."* Neither is it an object of Christian faith *how* the existence of three persons in the Godhead can be reconciled with the *unity* of the divine nature as one only living and true God. All that is necessary to confirm our faith is to be assured of the authenticity and divine authority of that revelation which declares him to us with the distinctive titles of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, ascribing personality to each, with the same attributes and perfections as existing in unity of essence, in being, and in eternity. Nor yet is it required of us to explain or even to comprehend the mysterious union of the divine nature with the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. His humanity was demonstrated by his birth, his growth from childhood to manhood, his temptations and tears, his passion and his death. His Godhead was equally demonstrated by his miracles, and his resurrection from the dead. When we view him weary and fatigued with his journey, or hungry, or sleeping in the hinder part of a ship, we have sufficient evidence that he was truly man; but when we see him arise and rebuke the winds and the waves of the sea into an instant calm, we have equal evidence that he was God. When we behold him weeping at the grave of his friend Lazarus, we are constrained to acknowledge that his tears were the tears of sympathizing humanity; but when we hear him authoritatively command the dead to come forth, and see Lazarus, whose body was

* That the term God, in the above passages, is applied to Jesus Christ, not as a relative term conveying merely the idea of rule or dominion, but as a distinctive title, and as expressive of his true nature, even his eternal power and Godhead, may be seen by consulting R. Watson's Institutes, vol. ii. pp. 12—25.

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already putrified, rising into life, and coming forth from the grave bound with the habiliments of the tomb, we must exclaim, He is God! for nothing short of the power that gave us being at first could give life to the dead. In short, if the sufferings, crucifixion, and death of Jesus Christ are evidences that he was properly man, the circumstances attending his death, his resurrection from the dead on the third day, and his ascension into heaven, are recorded as so many facts, exhibiting proof of his divine power and Godhead.

His divinity is not derived and subordinate; but he is properly God; and essentially one with the Father. For it is said by the evangelist that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;"—but in our text it is said of Jesus Christ, that he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." And the above passages can be reconciled only by admitting the proper divinity of our Saviour and his unity with the Godhead.

2. *The manner in which he gave himself for us.*

It was not barely the disinterestedness and self-devotion with which he gave himself to be a teacher and a prophet to instruct mankind into the nature and perfections of the divine law; explaining its purity, spirituality and extent; enforcing it with the awful sanctions of rewards and penalties:—nor yet that he gave himself to be a perfect example of obedience, and pattern of patience in the midst of suffering; but that he might redeem us from all iniquity. He gave himself to be an offering for sin; a sacrifice to the claims of divine justice, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And his death was *vicarious*. "He gave himself for us." "He died for us." He suffered, "the just for the unjust." He was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He "hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God." It is through the atoning sacrifice of Christ that pardon and salvation are offered to guilty sinners. Nor can we conceive of any other way by which God can forgive sin consistently with the moral perfections of his government, and the claims of a pure and holy law, without weakening our obligations or encouraging vice. The common assertion, that God has power to forgive sin, independently of any sacrifice, is very far from being satisfactory. For if pardon be by mere prerogative, it must either be universal or limited: if universal, it destroys the whole force of law and makes it of no effect; if limited, it must be by a manifest partiality, which would materially reflect upon the universal benevolence of God; and in either case, the majesty and perfections of the divine law and of the divine government would be essentially weakened, if not annihilated. Therefore the Saviour

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gave himself not only to fulfil the law, but to suffer its penalty for us, and he bore the punishment due on account of our transgression, by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, to satisfy the claims of divine justice; he rendered it consistent with the purity of the law to show mercy to the sinner without giving the least encouragement to sin.

Should it be said that it reflects upon the goodness of the divine character to suppose that he would not pardon sin without a ransom price to satisfy the demands of violated law; and that it implies implacability in God to punish the innocent Saviour to save guilty man: we reply, that it was not an act of revenge for private injuries, but it was an administration of public law, and purely magisterial, in which he was bound by his own perfections to maintain the purity and authority of his moral government; and it was so far from revenge, that "God so *loved* the world that he gave his only begotten Son;" because he was not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to repentance and be saved. As for his punishing the innocent to save the guilty, we are not to lose sight of the unity of the divine nature; that it was God our Saviour who "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

3. *The atonement of Christ is not confined to one nation or one age of the world; but embraces all nations and all ages of mankind.*

Should the Jew boast that the promise is to Abraham and his seed, it is sufficient for us to quote from the same promise,—"that in his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" or from the prophet Isaiah, "And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." Neither is it limited to a part out of all nations and ages. For he gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, and he tasted death for every man. Again, "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men—Jesus Christ is not only our advocate with the Father, but he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." The apostle has well argued, that "if, through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." For as many, therefore, as are involved in the ruinous fall of Adam,—and for all who have been constituted sinners by the original apostacy, Christ gave himself to redeem. He hath made an ample atonement for the sins of the whole world. Again, the apostle saith, "Not as the offence, so is the free gift; for the judgment was by one [offence] to condemnation: but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." Therefore he gave him-

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self, not only for original sin, but for the actual sins of all men—of every man—of the whole world. The atonement, then, is not to be preached as merely satisfying the claims of the once violated law, and to deliver us from the penalty of original guilt; but as extending to the many offences of every individual man. And the ambassador of Christ should hold up the bleeding sacrifice to the view of every sinner as an offering for *his sins*, and is authorized to address himself to every man, and urge it home to the conscience of every sinner, and to sinners of every description, that Jesus Christ gave himself for you; he bore your sins in his own body on the tree. He suffered and groaned for the hardness of your hearts. He blushed in blood on account of your neglect of God, and contempt of divine things. Yes, he shed his blood for you, that he might wash away your deepest stains of guilt; and his blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. His tears, and sighs, and grief, and dying groans, plead before the throne of eternal justice, in your behalf:—"*Father, forgive.*" For he ever liveth to make intercession: and the voice of mercy prevails before the Majesty on high, and from the lofty habitation of his holiness, descends to the abodes of sinful man in ten thousand echoes of *Why will ye die?—Why will ye perish?*

II. THE DESIGN OF HIS GIVING HIMSELF FOR US.

1. *It was an object every way worthy of the divine benevolence.*

The importance and magnitude of the design well comports with the nature and character of the sacrifice which he has offered for us. It was to redeem us from *all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

From the guilt of sin. Man having violated the law of God, stood guilty and condemned, and it was to redeem him from the condemning sentence of the law, that our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us. He was made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, and deliver us from the terrible punishment that was due for transgression. How deplorable is the condition of a sinner! He is miserable, helpless, and self-condemned; and his consciousness of guilt, and his fearful apprehensions of future wrath render him still more wretched. Yet among all the universe of created beings, there was not found an eye to pity, or an arm that could save. It was therefore every way worthy of him, "*whose delights were with the sons of men,*" that he should appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. For it was not a solitary sinner; but a world of intelligent, moral, and accountable beings, who were involved in guilt and exposed to the endless curses of a violated law. He gave himself to redeem the whole world, and in their behalf he interposed his blood, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Now the gospel proclaims pardon through the re-

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demption that is in Christ Jesus. A pardon bought with blood, a pardon free for all, and sufficient for every sinner. Yes, our secret as well as our open sins; our refined and fashionable sins, as well as the most degrading vices; the sins of our hearts, as well as of our lives, all require the atoning merits of the Saviour's death. And he gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity; to release us from the burden of all our guilt, and bring us into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Now the sinner who is laboring and heavy laden may come unto him and find rest. Even when clouds of darkness are about him, and the terrors of hell have taken hold of him, and the pains of death compass him around; though his soul is in great bitterness and the sorrows of his heart arise from a consciousness of accumulated guilt, let him come to the throne of grace; let him lay hold of the sacrifice of Christ, let him but touch the border of his garments, and he shall be made whole. He will be ready to break out in the language of the prophet: "I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me; thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me."

But without the sacrifice of Christ, and the atonement through the blood of the cross, there would be no gospel for sinners. Let the Saviour be preached as an example of perfect obedience; let his purity and perfect innocence be held up for our imitation and pattern; and the brilliancy of those colors would only cast a darker gloom over the sinfulness and wretchedness of our moral condition; or if the Saviour be exhibited only as a teacher and expounder of the perfect law of God, setting forth its purity, authority, and moral excellencies, demonstrating the reasonableness, fitness and benevolent character of the holy precepts, it would only sink the sinner into more certain despair, by showing him his exceeding sinfulness: for while he is constrained to acknowledge that the law is holy, and just, and good, he exclaims, Against this very law I have sinned, and it is this that completes my wretchedness; for I stand condemned as a transgressor of its wise and benevolent commands.

To illustrate the subject, let us suppose a person has been guilty of a capital offence against the law of his country; judicial sentence is passed upon him, and he is condemned to die. The time of his execution arrives; a multitude of his fellow citizens have collected to witness his unhappy fate. Just at the moment when a breathless anxiety pervades the assembly, and every eye is fixed on the poor victim of violated law; a rush is heard, and a voice proclaims, Make way!—good news!—glad tidings for the criminal!—Every bosom swells with expectation, and tears of joy start in every eye. For what else could be expected but a proclamation of pardon? But how awful would be the disappointment, should the pretended herald of good news come forward and read the law—the very law that he had

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broken, and by which the unhappy man was condemned to die. And having read, he gravely expatiates upon the justice and benevolence of the same! It would produce a thousand deaths in one; and the disappointed, trembling convict is left to shriek his death-groan with redoubled horror. And such would be the effect of preaching Christ without a sacrifice for sin, and without the atoning merits of his death. Such a gospel might do for the innocent; but it would be no gospel to sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: to procure their pardon and reconciliation to God, by giving himself a ransom for all, and to redeem them from all their iniquities.

2. *Being redeemed from the guilt, we shall also be released from the power and dominion of sin.*

Sin shall not have dominion over us, neither reign in our mortal bodies. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and are enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He gave himself for us, not only to redeem us, but that he might *purify* unto himself a peculiar people. To pardon a sinner without changing his heart, would be to leave him to his own perverseness, to pursue his iniquities with the same relish as before, and plunge himself into renewed guilt as often as the pardon might be repeated. And to procure a sacrifice for sin, without providing the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, would be to leave the work of redemption imperfect and inadequate to accomplish the benevolent design of him who gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people.

By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ hath obtained gifts for the rebellious, even the gift of the Holy Spirit, which he hath sent into the world as the promised Comforter, to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. And the Holy Spirit is given to enlighten the dark, to instruct the ignorant, to restrain the erring and vicious, and to invite and persuade the heart of man to be reconciled to God. This is the efficient agent to bring the deep and spiritual things of God's law home to the conscience, and it makes the word of God quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is emphatically styled "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ourselves of all ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It teacheth all men, and bringeth salvation to all men. It not only brings salvation within the reach of all men, making it possible for all men to be saved; but it exerts a saving influence upon all men, in a greater or less degree, as long as their probationary state lasts. The benefits of this grace on the moral state and condition of man in this world, are incalcu-

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lable. It interposes its restraints upon the vicious and unruly passions; checks the growing corruptions of the heart, by awakening a consciousness of guilt, and a dread of future punishment; and, like a kind of atmosphere, throwing itself around the human family, it produces a moral influence and persuasiveness to virtue and religion. It is impossible for us to conceive of the real degradation and misery into which the world would have been sunk, without the grace of God preventing us. We may fix our thoughts on the vilest and most degraded wretch we ever knew, and we are not able to say how much worse he would have been, or how much he now ranks in moral worth above what the best man that ever lived would have done, if the grace of God and influences of the Holy Spirit had never been given to man. Therefore,—

If the gift of the Holy Spirit operates so extensively, and produces such a moral influence even upon the rebellious, how much more will its renewing and sanctifying influence be exerted in the pardoned believer, who is redeemed from the guilt and power of his iniquities, to purify him unto God, and to purge out the old leaven of sin—of inward as well as outward sin. The believer is born of the Spirit, and has received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that he may know the things that are freely given him of God; and by the Spirit he overcomes the world, and is renewed after the image of him that created him;—by it he is made holy in heart and life. It creates in him all holy tempers, with spiritual affections and heavenly-mindedness, until he is enabled to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of God which passes knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God.

3. *He gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people;—a people ransomed with a price; released from the bondage and servitude of the world and of Satan.*

They are purified by the stripping off of the filthy garments of the flesh, and cleansed by the washing of regeneration. They are beautified and made estimable in his own sight, being adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, and by inward and outward holiness, they are fitted for every good work. He claims them as his peculiar property; and they are endeared to him as the price of his blood. They are partakers of the divine nature, bearing his moral image. He sets his love upon them, and upholds them in his hand, that they should not fear what man can do unto them. He taketh pleasure in his saints, and rebuketh kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed.

His people are a people of peculiar privileges. They not only enjoy the protection and guardian care of the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls; but he leads them like a flock, and maketh

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to lie down in green pastures. He exalteth them to a fellowship with himself, that they may enjoy communion with the Father, and with the Son. They are enabled to walk and talk with God, as he has said, I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and I will sup with them, and they shall sup with me. Being led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; and having received the spirit of adoption, they cry, Abba, Father, with confidence, for they know in whom they have believed, and their hearts are assured before him, that as he is, so are they in this world: and when he shall appear, they shall be like him.

Also in respect to their example before others. He hath purified them unto himself a peculiar people. He hath set them as a city upon a hill that cannot be hid. Their holy and heavenly tempers shed a lustre upon the profession of Christianity; while the sobriety of their manners, their temperance and self-denial, reprove the gay and dissipated world. The stability of their faith, and their fervent piety; the meekness and gentleness of their manners; the patience and fortitude with which they meet the common ills of life; the readiness with which they forgive injuries; and, above all, that charity which thinketh no evil, beareth all things and endureth all things—render them a peculiar people in the estimation of all wise and good men, and of peculiar excellence in society, and in the world. They are the light of the world, the salt of the earth; and as such they are commanded to let their light shine before men, that others may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

4. *He gave himself for us, and redeemed us with a design to qualify us for active usefulness in this world; that we should be zealous of* GOOD WORKS.

Our works of devotion are not to be confined to the closet; but are to be carried into the domestic and social circles: leading our families and the families with whom we associate, to the throne of grace. That with prayer and supplication, with songs of thanksgiving, we may encourage and excite in each other gratitude and love to God, and his holy worship. Our good works are to be seen in the sanctuary of the Lord, by a strict attention to all the institutes of his house, and by not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; especially on the Lord's day. Let it be consecrated to his worship; and let our souls call it a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable; not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasures, nor speaking our own words; that we may feed upon the heritage of our father Jacob.

Works of benevolence. The obligations of Christianity are not limited to works of reciprocal justice between man and man; neither

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is it sufficient to be able to say, "We have wronged no man, we have defrauded no man:" it is only the negative part of Christian virtue to do no harm. But we are to do good, and be merciful, even as our Father, which is in heaven, is merciful; by supplying the wants of the poor, relieving the distresses of the afflicted and oppressed, and causing the widow's heart to sing for joy. By caring for the souls that God hath made, especially for the rising generation, providing for their instruction in righteousness, encouraging Sabbath schools and the distribution of religious books and tracts with the Holy Scriptures; and, above all, by promoting the universal spread of the gospel, by means of the living ministry. Support it at home, and send it abroad. There is a vast field of missionary labor before us, and God hath ordained the preaching of the gospel to be the means of saving them that believe.

5. *But we are to be* ZEALOUS *of good works.*

With the holy flame of loving zeal burning in our bosoms, we shall not stop to make cold and philosophical calculations of the amount of good we may possibly do at the cheapest rate. But we shall be ready to do all the good we can, at all times, and in all the ways we can; not measuring our bounty by the liberality of others, but to the extent of the ability which God giveth. Neither is our zeal to be estimated by the amount of what we do, for it will be recollected that the poor widow who cast in her two mites was applauded as having done more than all those who had cast in of their abundance, for she of her penury had cast in all that she had; even all her living. The Scripture direction is, "Do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do." Lay up thy treasure in heaven, that thou mayest be rich towards God—rich in good works.

As the success of our good works depends upon the blessing of God, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, all our works of charity, all our efforts to promote the objects of Christian benevolence, all our conversation, reproofs, and exhortations should be accompanied with sincere and fervent prayer for the divine blessing upon the objects of our labor. And all our labors should be with a steady reference to the eternal happiness of ourselves and our fellow beings, when every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

The sacrifices of Christ and the redeeming influence of the gospel should encourage and excite our zeal to perform good works. He gave himself for us, and we should give ourselves to him and to his cause. We are not our own, for he hath bought us with a price; therefore we should glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his.

God, in the dispensations of his providence and grace, has pre-

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pared our way for extensive usefulness to almost all portions of the human family. To barbarous and savage nations, as well as in civilized and Christian countries, to soldiers and seamen, and to the poor, the gospel is to be preached. There is already a host of men redeemed from iniquity, purified and filled with the Holy Spirit, and zealous of good works, who are prepared and willing to go into all lands, brave all dangers, and undergo privations, suffer hardships, and endure toils and labor to carry the good tidings of the grace of God unto all people.

The voice of the missionary has already been heard in many parts of Asia, of Africa, in the isles of the sea, and in the wilds of America. And let every Christian heart be interested in the blessed work, and by their liberality, and with one voice, let their motto be, Go, ye missionaries of the cross, ye heralds of salvation, go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Go publish the Saviour's love; proclaim he died for all; his grace is free for all; and that he gave himself for all, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

While our brethren in Europe are extending their missionary labors in the east, and planting the standard of the cross among the numerous nations upon the continents, and in the islands of the eastern hemisphere, let us, with equal zeal, urge our way through the vast wilderness of the west; unfurl the banners of Emmanuel to the benighted savages that roam in the dark recesses of the forest, until the two grand encampments shall meet upon the shores of the Pacific, and a general burst of hallelujahs to the Lamb, and of free grace, shall encompass the globe.

Permit me now to say to my brethren in the ministry—God has called you to a good work, as well as a great work. The object of your labor, the importance of the work itself, the difficulties you may expect to encounter, and the impediments that must be overcome, demand your most zealous and enterprizing exertions. The heavenly Physician has entrusted you with the care of souls, and a fearful responsibility is laid upon you. You are placed as watchmen on the walls of Zion, and if any perish through your fault, their blood will be required at your hands. You are to give yourselves to reading, and to exhortation; study to show yourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth to be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. Besides your public administrations, your pastoral duties are complicated and arduous, and require much grace and patient perseverance. You are to instruct the ignorant, strengthen the weak, cheer and encourage the desponding by skilfully applying the word of promise, and to feed the flock of Christ that is committed to your charge. To become acquainted with the

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wants and habits of the people, it is necessary to visit them from house to house; keeping back nothing that is profitable, testifying to all repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ: showing yourselves examples to the flock in patience, in faith, and in charity.

Your public labors, especially as connected with the itinerant system, which enlarges the field of action, and opens an effectual door of usefulness, demands your utmost zeal. You are to go forth; and, as you go, preach, and teach the doctrine of the kingdom. Proclaim the crucified Saviour as the atoning sacrifice and only mediator between God and man. Preach him in the cities and villages, in towns and country places. You are to traverse the mountains and the plains, exposed to summer's heat and winter's cold; to crosses, hardships, and toils. The itinerant life is a life of sacrifice and service; but it is the service of God our Saviour, and of his church which he has purchased with his blood. From this consideration our zeal should kindle to a flame; we are laboring for him who gave himself for us; for him who redeemed us from our sins, and hath purified us unto himself as a peculiar people. Our gratitude should urge us on in the blessed work of the Lord. Although feeble nature would sometimes shrink from the privations and the difficulties of the work, and our souls are ready to start back from the terrible responsibilities that are involved in our calling; yet when we recollect what the Lord hath done for our own souls, we are enabled to say, our sufficiency is of God and not of ourselves; therefore, we will most gladly spend and be spent, that we may cultivate the vineyard of the Lord. Our regard for the interest of the church should excite our zeal in this good work. It is the heritage of the Lord, and the purchase of our Saviour's blood. It is the labor and travail of his soul, and the fruit of his tears and bloody sweat in the garden. He claims the church as his own body, and the members of it are the members of Christ in particular. They are endeared to him by the spirit of adoption and grace. If we have any love for Christ, we should be zealous to promote the peace and happiness of his church, and we cannot see the weakest or most unworthy of his members straying from the fold, without the deepest solicitude and concern for their souls; but with loving zeal, with earnest entreaties, we should pursue them, and, if possible, bring them back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life; and our love and zeal is not to be confined to the present number of believers; but we must love the increase of his kingdom, and, like our divine Master, we must labor to seek and to save that which is lost. The tenor of our commission is, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We are the ambassadors of Christ;

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he has sent us to his enemies, and we must in his name and stead pray them to be reconciled to God.

If we have ever discovered the deplorable condition of guilty sinners, and the purity and majesty of that holy law against which they have sinned, and the dreadful penalty they have incurred; if we have known the terrors of the Lord, and believe in the fearfulness of his judgments in the last day; then should our zeal be aroused to persuade men, and to plead with, and warn them to flee from the wrath to come, to escape the damnation of hell by flying to that Saviour who gave himself for them that he might redeem them from all their iniquities. And when we think of all that has been done to save our fallen race, and the love of God our Saviour to a world of guilty sinners; that he died for all, and is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; that he is loving unto every man, and gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time, and that he ever liveth to make intercession; and when we feel the effects of divine benevolence kindling in our own bosoms; it is then that the love of Christ constraineth us, and we are impelled forward in our work, not counting our lives dear unto us, that we may finish our course and the ministry which he hath given us.

FINALLY:—A due respect to the recompense of reward should stimulate the zeal of all Christians, and Christian ministers, to be faithful to the grace of God, and abound in every good work, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe; that he may say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then they that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever; for he shall gather his redeemed from the four winds of heaven, and the Lord himself shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and shall lead them to the fountains of life, clear as crystal, issuing from the throne of God and the Lamb." The harmony of heaven shall be one general burst of praise—TO HIM THAT HATH LOVED US AND GIVEN HIMSELF FOR US THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND MAKE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

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SERMON XXIII.

BY REV. ZACHARIAH PADDOCK,
CAZENOVIA, NEW YORK.

Delivered at the Dedication of a Church, in Scottsville, N. Y., in the year 1828; *also, on a similar occasion, in New Stockbridge, N. Y.,* 1830.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, ITS FOUNDATION AND STABILITY.

ST. MATTHEW, XVI. 18.

UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

GREAT diversity of opinion is entertained in the world respecting the character of Christ. By many he is regarded as an impostor, and his religion treated with perfect contempt. Others appear willing to concede to him the character of a good man, and of a great prophet; but, at the same time, strenuously deny that there was any thing sacrificial or meritorious in his death. Others, again, entertain more elevated conceptions of him: they believe him to be a kind of super-angelic being, ranking somewhere between angels and God. And there are still others who think they have the authority of inspiration for believing him to be—"The only wise God, our Saviour,"—"The only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

It seems, however, that this discrepancy of sentiment is not peculiar to the present age: it existed, perhaps, even to a greater extent, while the divine Redeemer himself was here upon earth, than it has at any period since. This fact appears probable from the connection in which the text is introduced. The preceding context informs us that "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" We cannot reasonably suppose that Christ addressed this interrogation to his disciples because he was ignorant of the opinions which were

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generally entertained respecting him. The end which he probably had in view was, to get a declaration of their faith from themselves, in order to confirm and strengthen them in it. Their reply was, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias: and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

From this answer it would seem that the Pharisaic doctrine of the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, at this time pretty generally obtained among the Jews; for it was on this principle that they believed that the soul of the Baptist, or of Elijah, of Jeremiah, or of some one of the prophets had come to a new life in the person of Christ.

But, without stopping to comment on the faith of the multitude, Christ continues his interrogation—"But whom say YE that I am?" To this Simon Peter, with characteristic forwardness, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" This was a concise, emphatic, and comprehensive confession of his faith: and that his views respecting the character of his Divine Master were perfectly correct, is rendered indubitable by what was said in reply; —"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my FATHER which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The church of Christ, its foundation, and stability, will be the principal topics of discourse, on the present solemn and highly interesting occasion.

I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE CHURCH?

This is a question in the discussion of which theologians have engaged with much warmth; and the answers to which, as given by different individuals, have comprised considerable variety of opinion. It does not, however, incorporate with our present design to enter at all into the merits of this controversy. Such a course would be as unprofitable as it would be foreign from our present object. All the controversial bearings of the question will, therefore, be studiously avoided. Our sole design is to give it such a consideration as will, in our judgment, be best adapted to experimental and practical purposes.

The primary meaning of the word *church* is simply an assembly, congregation, or collection of persons; the character of which association is to be determined by connecting circumstances: for the original epithet may, with equal propriety, be applied to any concourse of people, good or bad; gathered together for lawful or unlawful purposes. Hence, it seems that some qualifying term must be associated with the word *church*, in order to give it any fixed and definite signification. That association of persons that we now con-

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template, is called *the church of Christ;* meaning the whole company of Christians, wheresoever found.

The word, however, is sometimes used in a more limited or less extensive sense. Thus it is unquestionably used by the compilers of the thirty-nine articles. "The visible church of Christ," say they, "is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." For this use of the word, they most certainly have the authority of the New Testament. In that we read of the church at Colosse, at Corinth, at Ephesus, &c., as well as the "seven churches of Asia," to whom the famous Apocalyptic epistles were addressed.

But it is equally true that the term *church*, in the sense of the New Covenant Scriptures, sometimes includes the whole body of Christian believers, scattered, as they are, in different parts of the world. Hence, in that comprehensive confession of faith, which we call, for the sake of distinction, "the Apostles' Creed," it is denominated the "catholic" or *universal church:* because it is constituted of all the professors of Christianity, to whatever sect or denomination they may belong. In this sense, the word church, in our text, is most incontestably used.

The church of Christ and the unregenerate world form two distinct bodies. Their characters are essentially different from each other. It was upon this principle that Christ said to his disciples—"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Thus also St. Peter, addressing himself to the "saints that were scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia," &c., says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) "My kingdom," says Christ, "is not of this world." All attempts, therefore, to unite the church of Christ with human governments must be both unconstitutional and abortive. If associated, the one or the other will, in a short time, lose its distinctive characteristics. As in chemistry, certain opposing compounds produce broil and fermentation, until one of the ingredients gets the mastery; so every effort to unite *church* and *state* is an attempt to blend two principles so essentially unlike each other, that they can never be made harmoniously to amalgamate. The church of Christ is, indeed, called out from the world, and taught to regard its unholy friendship as "enmity to God."

This associated body of believers, *the church*, is represented in the New Testament under various emblems. The metaphor employed in the text is that of a well-constructed edifice. The same figure is

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elsewhere frequently employed.—"Ye are God's building." "Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" "—— But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we." Now the use of this figure by the apostles was not a mere fortuitous circumstance, not a mere rhetorical flourish; they had a specific and obvious design in it: and this design was to point out certain distinguishing characteristics of Christ's church. This will probably become the more evident as we proceed.

Does a house generally occupy some conspicuous position? So the church of Christ is "a city set on a hill, and cannot be hid."

Has a house various component parts, all of which are requisite for the perfection of the whole? So God has endowed his church with various members, officers, and gifts; all of which are necessary to constitute it a perfect habitation. In illustration of this thought, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, affirms that God "gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Chap. iv. 11—13.)

Is there a perfect adaptation to, and a mutual dependence upon, each other, among the different parts of a well-finished edifice? Thus it is with the church of Christ. The apostle from whom we last quoted says, in the same epistle,—"Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Chap. ii. 20, 21.)

Does a house furnish a place of refuge from the storm and tempest? So the church, being guarded and protected by the divine hand, furnishes an asylum, "a strong hold," for all of its members. Having thus comprehensively brought to view the most prominent characteristics of Christ's church, let us proceed, in pursuance of our plan, to notice,

II. ITS FOUNDATION:—"*Upon this rock will I build my church.*"

But what are we to understand by this ROCK? Those who are swayed by the Roman Catholic dogmas roundly assert that nothing else is meant by it than Peter himself! According to this comment, then, the whole Christian fabric is supported by "the arm of flesh!" It rests not on the ROCK OF AGES, but on one of Christ's frail disciples!

Now, if this were the literal meaning of the text, we should be led to regard it as an interpolation, as a declaration blasphemously

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imputed, by the pen of an enemy, to the Holy Ghost! We are, however, driven to no such extremity. The passage, when rightly understood and fairly interpreted, conveys a sense perfectly consistent with the most orthodox faith. Peter, having confessed Jesus to be "*the* Christ, the Son of the living God," was addressed by him in the following words:—"Blessed art thou," &c. "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter," thou art my disciple, and art perfectly correct in giving me this character; "And upon this rock," this Divine Being whom thou confessest me to be, "will I build my church." Any other interpretation would make the text speak a language in direct opposition to the other parts of the sacred volume; and that Peter is not designated in our Lord's words must be evident to all who are not blinded by prejudice. Peter was only one of the builders in this sacred edifice, and, therefore, could not be the foundation of it. Besides, Christ is every where represented as being the only foundation of his church. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11.) "Thus saith the Lord, behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. xxviii. 16.) This prediction St. Peter was so far from thinking fulfilled in himself, that he applied it directly to Christ: see 1 Epis. chap. ii. and sixth verse. "Ye are built," says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Chap. ii. 20.) In making this declaration the apostle most probably had in mind the 22d verse of the 118th Psalm,—"The stone which the builders refused, the same has become the head stone of the corner."

A rock or stone has two properties which render it peculiarly suitable for a foundation, viz. *strength* and *stability:* it is both solid and durable. Now if this figure has any force, it must mean that the Lord Jesus Christ possesses certain characteristics which correspond to these properties in a good foundation. But, let me ask, if he were only a man, or even a super-angelic being, but still a mere creature, could he be regarded as a good and sufficient foundation for the church of the living God? However exalted his rank, if he be only a creature, he must be dependent; and, consequently, has no inherent, unoriginated strength to impart or exert in the support of those who confide or trust in him for salvation. The very nature of the case, therefore, shows that he must be something more than a man, something more than an angel: in a word, that he must be GOD, not in a subordinate, but in the highest sense of the word, in order to afford us any ground of trust and security.

But a doctrine of such infinite importance to the fallen family of Adam is not left to be supported by merely inferential testimony: it is sustained by the clear, explicit, repeated, and positive declarations

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of the word of God. But our limits, you perceive, will not admit of our discussing, very extensively, the question of our Saviour's supreme divinity and Godhead. A few passages of scripture must, however, be introduced.

The first we would notice is recorded in the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel. We are here informed that our Saviour said, in a public address to the Jews,—"Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews, thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He replied—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM!"—Let us inquire a little into the import of this declaration of our Saviour. He here proposes himself to his countrymen as their Messiah; that grand object of hope and desire to their fathers, and particularly to this first "father of the faithful, Abraham." But his countrymen, not acknowledging his claim to the character of the Messiah, and therefore not allowing his supernatural priority of existence to Abraham, chose to consider his words in a signification merely human. "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" But what does our Saviour reply to this low and gross comment upon his declaration? Does he retract it, by warping his language to their poor perverseness; and thus waive his pretensions to the assumed divinity? No! To have so acted would have been derogatory to his character, and injurious to their interests. He actually repeats his claim to the character. He actually enforces his pretensions to a supernatural priority of existence. He even heightens both. He mounts up far beyond Abraham. He ascends above all the orders of creation, and places himself with God at the head of the universe. He thus arrogates to himself all that high pitch of dignity, which the Jews expected their Messiah to assume. This he does in the most energetic manner which his simplicity of language, so natural to inherent greatness, would possibly admit. He also introduces what he says with much solemnity in the form, and much more in the repetition. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM." He says not of himself as he says of Abraham —"before he was, I was." This, indeed, would have asserted his priority of existence: but it would not have been sufficient to declare what he *now* meant to assert, namely, his full claims to the majesty of the Messiah. He, therefore, drops all forms of language that could be accommodated to the mere creatures of God, and arrests one that was appropriate to the Godhead itself. "Before Abraham was," that is, before he was made, "I AM." He thus gives himself the signature of uncreated and continual existence, in direct opposition to contingent and created. He says that

"An eternal now for ever lasts,"

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with him. He attaches to himself that very stamp of eternity which is appropriated to the Godhead in the Old Testament, and from which an apostle afterwards describes "Jesus Christ" to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Nor did the Jews pretend to misunderstand him now. They could not. They heard him directly and decisively claiming the noblest rights of their Messiah, and appropriating to himself the highest honors of their God. Accordingly, they took up stones to cast at him as a blasphemer, what indeed he was in his pretensions to be God, if he had not been in reality both their Messiah and their God. But he instantly proved himself to their very senses to be both, by exerting the energetic powers of his Godhead upon them. For "he hid himself," rendered himself invisible, "and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."*

The character here assumed by Christ is attributed to him in all the apostolic epistles. "In him," says St. Paul to the Colossians, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Chap. ii. 9.) Again: "By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth; whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Chap. i. 16, 17.) And again, in his Epistle to the Philippians, he affirms that Jesus Christ, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be EQUAL with God." (Chap. ii. 6.) St. Jude expressly calls him "the only wise God, our Saviour;" thereby authorizing the inference that if there be any other God, he must be, at least comparatively, *a foolish one!* And besides, he calls him "OUR SAVIOUR;" a character which is exclusively claimed by the Jehovah of the Old Testament. When addressing himself to his ancient people, through the medium of the prophet Isaiah, he says, "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Chap. xliii. 3.) "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour." (Verse 11.) "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Chap. xlv. 22.)

The same prophet, elsewhere, anticipating the complex character and offices of the Messiah, says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (Chap. ix. 6.) The prophet here contemplates the *humanity*, as well as *divinity*, of the Lord Jesus. The union of these two natures in his person was indispensably necessary to constitute him the Saviour of lost and perishing sinners. Hence, when St. Paul would set forth the appropri-

* See Whitaker on this passage.

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ateness of his character, as the Mediator between God and man, he exclaims—"Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh!" "He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." "It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren," that is, in all things requisite to the perfection of human nature, "that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in things pertaining to God." Accordingly, his incarnation is celebrated as one of the grandest and most important events ever recorded in any history, human or divine. An angel was commissioned from the courts of heaven to announce to the shepherds in the field the birth of the Divine Redeemer. "Fear not," said this celestial messenger; "for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*

It was by his incarnation, ministry, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, that the glorious plan of redemption was carried into successful operation. Here, then, my brethren, you see the foundation of the Christian's hope,—the basis of that spiritual temple, in which all true believers are "living stones." Here you behold that "sure foundation," that "tried corner stone," upon which the SUPREME ARCHITECT is "building up Zion." A God of infinite wisdom will build on no other foundation than the rock of ages.

Having thus noticed the church of Christ and its foundation, it remains that we consider,

III. ITS STABILITY:—"*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

By the "gates of hell," we should probably understand the machinations and powers of the invisible world. Anciently, the gates of fortified cities were used to hold councils in; and were usually places of great strength. It may be remarked, also, that in the writings of the ancients the term "gates" signifies, by a usual metonymy, the troops or military forces which issue forth from them. Our Lord's expression seems to mean that neither the plots, nor stratagems, nor strength of Satan and his angels † should ever be able to succeed in demolishing that spiritual temple which he himself had resolved to rear, based upon the Rock of eternal ages; that not all the powers of darkness, however inveterate their malice, or however firm their alliance, should ever effect the extirpation of his church; but that he would, in successful resistance of all opposition, establish and build it up.

The church of Christ has enemies. It has always had them.

* This Sermon was originally delivered on Christmas day.

† Dr. A. Clarke.

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Ever since the apostate spirits were cast down from the realms of light, truth and righteousness have had their unceasing adversaries, their malignant foes. And, strange as it may seem, a great part of our species are opposed to the cause of God, notwithstanding that cause involves their dearest interests in both worlds! They appear to be willing and faithful allies of the prince of darkness! The truth of this position may be fully sustained by appealing to painful, but still perfectly well-attested facts.

Immediately after the ascension of Christ, his infant church was assailed by the Jews with a torrent of persecution. It was not enough for them to crucify "the Lord of life and glory;" they were bent upon the destruction of all who were called by his name: and in execution of their wicked purposes, they laid, wherever they could, rude and barbarous hands on the innocent and unoffending disciples of the Prince of peace. And as soon as the political constitution of the Jews was destroyed, and they ceased to be a nation, the heathen took the work of persecution into *their* hands; and they made furious and bloody work of it, indeed. Thousands and tens of thousands of the humble votaries of the cross were inhumanly immolated, during the reigns of Nero, Domitian, and their brutal successors. But, notwithstanding all this, the work of God still went on, and conversions were daily and numerously made to the Christian faith. It was, indeed, ascertained, and became a proverb, that "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church!" At length, however, the enemy found that he could not in this way succeed; and very adroitly changed his method of attack. He, all at once, put on the guise of a friend; and, under the reign of Constantine, effected a union of church and state: and now his plan was successful, even to Satanic admiration. It is true, nominal Christianity spread with unprecedented rapidity; but, at the same time, real, vital, experimental godliness decreased, in exact proportion. The once humble disciples of Christ, being clothed with civil authority, were inflated with pride, and "fell into the condemnation of the devil." Religion degenerated into an unmeaning round of rites and ceremonies: and the nominal church became, to a very great extent, a prey to bigotry, superstition and priestcraft. But even then there were many who would not submit to "wear the mark of the beast," who disdained to "bow the knee to Baal, and who, amidst surrounding corruptions, continued to be the favorites of Heaven.

"The mystery of iniquity," however, "continued to work," and to diffuse its deleterious influence, until the sixteenth century; when the fire of reformation was kindled in Germany, by the immortal MARTIN LUTHER. And, even then, every effort was made, which Romish pains and penalties could make to extinguish this grateful and hallowing flame. But, being fanned by the gentle breezes of the

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Holy Spirit, all the floods of persecution which were poured upon it did but little to impede its progress; and soon it enwrapped, and enlightened, and warmed the whole European continent!

And now the church of Christ was destined to experience a new species of opposition. Those very skeptic philosophers, who had rested quiet and undisturbed under the reign of Romish superstition, cried out most vehemently as the work of reformation advanced, and aimed their shafts, not at the corrupt hierarchy, but most cordially united with it in persecuting the saints of the Most High God. But their opposition, however base and unkind, had, on the whole, a most friendly influence: for it taught the true disciples of Christ that no confidence was to be reposed in the friendship of the world; it taught them to act in concert; and to rely exclusively upon omnipotent aid for protection. The consequence was, they achieved a most glorious victory.

Infidelity then, fairly beaten, sounded a retreat from the field of action; but has since, at different periods and with various success, sallied forth upon the armies of the living God. This unchaste cause—the cause of infidelity—appears in complex forms, and its votaries range themselves under different banners; but their object is the same—the subversion of Christian institutions, and the complete prostration of the religion of the Bible. The whole combined forces of the prince of darkness appear now to be meditating a general attack. But however vast their number, or however imposing their aspect, let not the soldiers of the cross be intimidated. Christ has said he "*will* build his church, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." All the attributes of God are pledged for the protection of his militant charge. He will be a wall of fire round about his church, and underneath her he will place his everlasting arms. His omnipotent hand still rolls along the mighty wheels of providence: heaven, earth, and hell are subject to his sway. What though all the intelligent beings in the whole universe should combine their energies with a determination to thwart his designs! Ah! a worm raising its head against the heavens, an atom boasting that it will heave the earth from its centre, affords but an infinitely feeble emblem of the vanity and arrogance of such a combination.

Resting, then, on the promises of a God, almighty and infinitely faithful, the church may, with perfect security, bid defiance to all her enemies. She may adopt the language of the prophet Isaiah: "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken to pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken to pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for our God is with us." (Chap. viii. 9, 10.) Let her foes be ever so numerous or powerful, "The daughter of Zion will shake her head at them, she will laugh them to scorn." Let

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some new Dioclesian, if he please, declare that he will utterly destroy the Christian superstition; and attempt, by dint of war, to demolish that spiritual temple, of which Christ is the foundation; and it will again be found that all these attempts, like the arrows which the Parthians vainly directed at the sun, will return winged with vengeance on the heads of those who aimed them. Let the united strength of earth and hell assail the Zion of our God; she shall stand unmoved and undaunted; for she is based upon the rock of ages: Jehovah, God of hosts, throws his buckler before her, and his faithfulness is her rere-ward."*

The church of Christ shall not only *stand*, but, according to our text, she shall be *built up:* "She shall become the praise and the joy of the whole earth." We might introduce many prophecies, as well as promises, to confirm the doctrine here advanced. But as we have already protracted our discourse to an unpremeditated length, a few must suffice.

Isaiah, looking down through succeeding ages, exclaims, "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." (Chap. ii. 2.) The Psalmist assures us that Messiah "shall have his dominion from sea to sea; and from the rivers to the ends of the earth:" that "all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations serve him." And when the future fortunes of the church were displayed in prophetic vision to John, the revelator, "He saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people: and he heard the seventh angel sounding, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." "He must reign," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "till he has put down all rule and authority." Yes! yes! my brethren, "the little stone," which Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, is destined, ere long, to "fill the whole world!" "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Dan. vii. 27.)

And, my brethren, do not heart-gladdening facts clearly indicate that these prophecies are in a rapid course of fulfilment? The gospel is now spreading throughout the four quarters of the world, and the Bible translating into all the different languages spoken by the widely scattered progeny of Adam. And the blessing of God seems

* See Dr. H. Kollock's Missionary Sermon.

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to attend every effort made for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Revivals of religion are becoming frequent and extensive. There is a gathering round the standard of the cross, and a crowding to the gates of Zion. The sound of redemption is rolling from valley to valley, and reverberating from hill to hill. We see, in almost every direction, temples rearing for the public worship of God, and institutions forming for the promotion of pure and undefiled religion. How astonishing that in this country, inhabited a few years since only by the most depraved pagans, the church of Christ should find a peaceful asylum, and should herself become the refuge of countless myriads! And her holy privileges were, perhaps, never sought and found by a greater number of precious souls, than at the present era. In the Methodist Episcopal church alone, there has been, during the last year, an increase of nearly 40,000 members; an increase considerably exceeding that of any former year since her organization in the United States. And, my brethren, this work *must* go on; for it is the work of God, and he can always find means and instruments to accomplish his benevolent designs, touching the regeneration of our sinful world. In vain shall infidelity raise its voice; in vain shall wicked men and fallen spirits "take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed:" "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."

Our subject suggests several practical reflections, with a few of which we shall close the discourse:—

1. *It teaches us a lesson of Christian charity.*

As the church of Christ includes all true believers, to whatever sect or denomination they may belong, they should not regard each other as "strangers and foreigners;" but as "fellow citizens," and members of the same "household of faith." We are far from thinking it a misfortune that there are different sects of professing Christians. If but one denomination existed on earth, it is highly probable that there would be nearly or quite as much diversity of religious opinion as there now is. This would give rise to intestine broils, which would be likely to destroy the whole church. As it now is, every rational Christian can find some religious body with which he can cordially unite in Christian fellowship. But while we have our different and appropriate banners, let us remember that we all belong to Emmanuel's army, and that it is only by acting in concert that we shall ever succeed in "putting to flight the armies of the aliens;" that we shall ever be able to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and silence the clamor of infidelity. Towards such a union much has been done, during the last half century; but much more remains to be done. Let every lover of that gospel that breathes "peace on earth and benevolence among men," contribute something towards

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bringing about this happy state of things. Let every friend of the Saviour pray that his church may, as in the apostolic days, be "of one heart and of one mind." The wranglings and bickerings of professing Christians have done more disservice to the cause of religion than the writings of a thousand infidels! O let us, then, "be at peace among ourselves." If we must *provoke one another*, let it be only *to love and good works*. Let us again constrain an unbelieving world to exclaim, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!"

2. *Our subject suggests serious inquiry.*

Upon what foundation are we building? Is the Rock of ages our rock? Upon what basis are we predicating our hopes of heaven? These, my brethren, are far from being questions of mere idle curiosity: they bear immediately and specially upon our spiritual and eternal interests. And if there ever was a time, since the establishment of the church on earth, when questions like these should receive a calm and candid answer, the present is that time. It is a day of rebuke and blasphemy. The supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus is not only impiously called in question, but openly derided by many who profess to believe in the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures!

This class of semi-infidels has been rapidly augmenting and gaining strength during the last fifteen or twenty years. Certain sections of the east have been sending out by scores the abettors of Unitarianism, and thereby diffusing its deleterious sentiments throughout our land. With these sentiments our American Zion is, if we mistake not, at this time seriously and alarmingly threatened. Hence we feel it our solemn duty, while dedicating this house to the worship of Almighty God, to raise a warning voice against the indulgence of any sentiments that may tend, however remotely, to bring in question the essential divinity and supreme Godhead of him who is laid in Zion for a foundation. To adopt the language of an eloquent divine,* to whom we have once before referred, we would say—Wo to that man who shall ever stand in this desk, and attempt to lay any other foundation,—that shall present any other ground of a sinner's acceptance with God than the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Emmanuel,—that shall attempt to derogate from the essential glories and mediatorial perfections of the Son of God! Should such a one ever stand here, and, under the garb of a minister of the Redeemer, assail those great truths which are our only hope, accursed be the eloquence or ingenuity that he may employ to diminish our attachment to the cross of Christ! Should such a one ever occupy this desk, whatever may be his talents or acquirements, the powers of his mind or the graces of his manner, you may then write on the

* Dr. Kollock.

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walls of this sanctuary, ICHABOD; *for the glory will have departed!*

3. *Finally, the subject calls loudly for renewed activity in the cause of Christ.*

When Christ promised to establish and build up his church, he did not make the promise to encourage apathy, but to stimulate exertion. When God assures his people that Amalek shall be destroyed, do they sit down and wait the fulfilment of the promise? No! The hands of Moses are immediately uplifted in prayer, and the sword of Joshua courageously wielded. In like manner, when the prosperity of the church is foretold and promised, it is not to make us negligent and inactive, but to strengthen our faith and prompt us to holy enterprise.

Before the church shall arise to that pitch of glory and perfection to which she is predestined to arise, she must pass through many severe conflicts. Through whatever difficulties she may have already passed, her warfare is not yet accomplished. Other battles are to be fought, and other victories to be won. All, therefore, who are desirous to see Christ victorious over principalities and powers, and all the potent enemies of his government, must contribute their utmost towards the achievement of the victory. We must come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty; always remembering that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, though mighty through God to the demolishing the strong holds of Satan.

God carries on his work of saving souls and building up his church, in a great measure, by human means. Consequently, we may and should instrumentally contribute towards the advancement of his work. To do this, we must faithfully discharge those duties which are connected with our respective stations in the church.—And now, men, brethren, and fathers, what say you to these things? Shall we deny ourselves the honorable and lofty distinction of being workers together with God? No! your conduct says, No! This neat, well-finished place of worship, reared by your charity and industry, says, No!

But let me remind you that you have one more important duty to perform in furtherance of this work; I mean the duty of PRAYER. All your efforts will be unavailing without the divine blessing. Our sufficiency is of God. But unsought, unsolicited, his help and blessing cannot be reasonably expected. Let this house, then, be emphatically *a house of prayer.* Let no trivial consideration keep you from it; and when you assemble here, remember that the prosperity of the church very essentially depends on the fervency of your prayers, and the purity of your devotions. Let us enter more than ever into the spirit of that incomparable compend of devotion—"the Lord's prayer"—and especially that part of it in which we are taught to pray —THY KINGDOM COME: THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. AMEN.

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SERMON XXIV.

BY REV. AARON LUMMUS,
BOSTON, MASS.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF GROWING IN GRACE

2 PETER III. 18.

BUT GROW IN GRACE.

To a pious mind there is music in the very sound of the word GRACE: and so there will be in heaven for ever, when the golden harps are set to those ever-during anthems, the burden of which will be—Grace in our redemption, conviction, pardon, renewal in the image of God, preservation, and final glorification. Parkhurst explains the term Χαρις [grace] to mean, among other things,—"1. *Favor, acceptance*, whether with God or man. 2. *A favor, a kindness granted or desired.* 3. *A benefit.* 4. When spoken of God or Christ, it very often particularly refers to their *free and undeserved favor or kindness in the redemption and salvation of man.* 5. *The gracious and unmerited assistance of the Holy Spirit*," i. e. as I think, either "in his miraculous gifts, or his operations and influences on the hearts of believers in general:" although he does not admit the latter definition. "The general idea of the word," says Buck, "as it relates to God, is his free favor and love." Among other definitions, Johnson gives the following, which well comport with the Scripture use of the term: 1. "*Favor, kindness.* 2. *Favorable influence of God on the human mind.* 3. *Virtue, effect of God's influence.* 4. *Pardon.*" Butterworth gives no less than eighteen definitions of the word: the most important of which are, "1. *Justification by the righteousness of Christ imputed.* 2. *Conversion to God, and sanctification by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit.*" The above expositions of the term are not contradictory to one another, but, taken together, give us a clear and evangelical idea of its meaning, viz. THE UNMERITED AND MERCIFUL FAVOR OF GOD.

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Grace, in the New Testament, is often said to be "of our Lord Jesus Christ." This appendage is very fitly and usefully added; as our Lord Jesus Christ is the grand medium, by whose vicarious sufferings grace was purchased for us, and through whose availing intercession it now descends to us. Therefore it should never be forgotten, that all the grace of God to man is "of" and through our Lord Jesus Christ. To him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all the praise and glory, while we enjoy the fruits, or reap the rewards of grace. Man could not redeem himself, angels could not help him; all was darkness and despair, till help was laid on One, who is "mighty to save." The Father gave him, and he gave himself for us; to become incarnate, taking all the innocent infirmities of mortal human nature; laboring, suffering, dying to redeem us. But he rose triumphant from the grave; and, not forgetting the object of his incarnation, "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." From his meritorious passion, and intercession in heaven for men, flow all the blessings implied in that precious word GRACE: therefore it is properly, "*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

In numerous places where this word is used in the Bible, and in our text particularly, it is expressive of inward *holiness;* as this implies pardon, sanctification, conformity to the moral image and revealed will of God: all of which we obtain through the mercy of the Father, the mediation of the Son, the inward operation and influence of the Spirit. This is *unmerited favor;* a state of mind which we could never attain by our unassisted efforts. This implies not only a change in our relation to God, from being aliens and enemies, to becoming children, friends, and obedient servants; but an entire moral revolution in the heart; in the desires, tempers, objects, and motives; the current of the thoughts and affections is turned, spiritual death is removed, and spiritual life infused into the soul. So high and holy is this work, that it could not be wrought by angels; omnipotency, joined with infinite mercy, alone can accomplish it.

In further pursuing the subject, we shall,

I. EXPLAIN THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION IN THE TEXT, and
II. ENFORCE IT BY VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS.

I. *The exhortation is to be explained.*

1. The apostle would have all that have come into the state of grace which has been specified, hold fast whereunto they have attained. He knew, from sad experience, that it is possible for those who have been thus enlightened, made partakers of the heavenly gift, tasted the good word of God, and felt the powers of the world to come, to fall into sin. After following Christ for at least three years; hearing his wonderful sermons, beholding his immaculate example,

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witnessing his astonishing miracles, preaching in his name, and even after having been an eye-witness of his transfiguration, Peter himself had denied Jesus; positively and repeatedly denied him—denied him publicly; and that only on being accosted by a maid as one of his followers. He therefore knew the guilt and horrors of a backslider, the keen and bitter pangs of a second repentance. Now he comes forward to warn all Christians against the like offence.

2. Not only would he have us stand fast in a state of grace; but, as the only way in which we can stand, he would have us grow, i. e. go forward, increase, and improve therein. This state of grace, however exalted and glorious a thing it is to be a child of God, may be abundantly improved. We may progress continually in the grace of God. But in order to grow in grace effectually, the whole subject should be understood, the whole length of the heavenly way must be marked out in the mind, and we must look definitely at the whole of our privilege and duty as Christians. God requires perfect holiness in his people; that they love him with all the heart; that they serve him in all things, with a single eye to his glory, not doing their own will in any thing, but in all things saying, "Thy will be done" —"not as I will, but as thou wilt." But this cannot be fulfilled while any sin dwells in the soul. Therefore God has promised "to circumcise our heart, that we may love him with all the soul,"—"to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"—"that the blood of Christ shall cleanse us from all sin,"—"to fill with righteousness those who hunger and thirst after it,"—"to sanctify us wholly, and preserve us blameless." And to confirm our faith, he has in the Scriptures given us many examples of this advanced state of grace. Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and was translated. Abraham was a pattern of perfect faith; Moses, of perfect communion with God; Job, of patience; Solomon, of wisdom; Caleb and Joshua, of fidelity in the midst of a nation of half-hearted professors; David, of perfect devotion; John, and others to whom he alludes, of perfect love; Paul, and many of his brethren, experienced the same kind of perfection in grace. This doctrine of Christian perfection should be understood and believed. These commands, promises, and examples of entire holiness should be set up in our minds as the standard of our attainments, as the mark of our high calling, to which we are bound by the law, invited by the promises, and incited by the example of these holy men of God.

3. But from this advanced state in grace our unsanctified hearts will naturally recoil, and we shall go not up to our entire inheritance, unless the excellency of it draws us, and a deep conviction of its necessity impels us to the conquest. Our remaining unbelief has an astonishing power over us; stupidity and blindness of mind have yet a castle in the heart; so that it will never be wholly possessed by

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Emmanuel, without a mighty struggle. Therefore we must rein up our minds to this great work, set the holy requisitions of the divine law before our eyes, and earnestly pray to God that we may not recede from the warfare, that we may not rest in our entrenchments, while one corruption remains alive in our hearts. If we look at any thing short of this complete victory, we shall pay dearly for our tardiness: every parley we hold with inbred sin strengthens the foe, and exceedingly weakens our graces. Hence it is that so many sincere, though feeble believers, go halting, doubting, fearing; go forward and then backward, throughout a great portion of their lives.

4. In order to grow in grace, we must be faithful to the light *we* have received. If others do not see or believe with us, we must not follow *their* light, but the measure which God hath given to us; otherwise, how shall we render up our account to God? Every man must choose, act and answer for himself. Now we know that secret prayer, meditation, self-denial, reading and hearing the word, social and family prayer, baptism and the Lord's supper, associating with the church of God, are means of grace appointed by the Author of salvation: we know also that honesty, industry and economy are civil duties, which as Christians we are to observe faithfully: that affection, fidelity, and a due performance of every domestic duty are required of us in the circle of our relatives; that honor, justice and kindness are due from us to each other, as citizens and neighbors; and according to these convictions we must conduct in all things, or we cannot advance to all that grace which God hath set before us.

5. Growing in grace implies a diligent use of all those public, social, and private opportunities of waiting upon God, which his providence allows us to enjoy. Prayer, reading and hearing the gospel, &c. are the ordinary means of salvation; and in the faithful use of them we are to seek a maturity of grace. We should grow in grace and knowledge under every sermon, exhortation, and prayer. Every chapter we read in the sacred volume, every page in any other good book, should lead us nearer to the fountain of light and grace. Every prayer offered by us should bring down some new token of divine mercy to our souls. If we are ministers of the sanctuary, every sermon we preach should be first written on our hearts by the Spirit of God; the same Spirit should be invoked to attend us in the pulpit: then the proclaiming of gospel truth will profit others, and return in abundant blessings to our own souls. It is equally the privilege of ministers, as of other believers, to be quickened and refreshed in the duties of God's house: but wo to that man who forgets or neglects his own soul, while professedly laboring to save others. But if we preach not a present, free and full salvation by faith, we cannot enjoy it; and perhaps we cannot advance this work

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in our own hearts more effectually than by sincerely, humbly, and faithfully enforcing it upon others.

6. We are sometimes urged onward in the path of holiness, by circumstances which seem to be altogether against us; as a ship at sea may be furiously driven, by gales and tempests, directly towards her port. Our losses, crosses, trials, temptations, and various sufferings afflict and toss us about on the sea of life; but always bring us nearer the harbor of eternal rest, if they are met and endured in a right spirit. Therefore, these apparently adverse circumstances should be met with resignation and firmness, endured with patience and faith. It is more agreeable to our nature for things to go on in a smooth and even manner; but our Divine Physician sees that violent and bitter remedies are sometimes necessary for the health and salvation of our souls. By these apparently severe dispensations we are driven to prayer, seriousness, humility, deadness to the world, and a greater nearness to God. From these considerations it is manifest, we ought never absolutely to wish our sufferings less; but when we pray for their removal, to say with our blessed Master—"Not as I will, but as thou wilt." The more reconciled we are to the will of God, the better it will be for us in all circumstances.

7. Amid all the convictions, works and sufferings of those who are aiming to grow in grace, it should be remembered that nothing is gained without faith. This act of the mind does more in one hour, than every thing else without it can do in an age. Some ask for faith, as if it were the peculiar, distinct gift of God; without considering, that God cannot give it independently of their own agency. We do not ask him to give us prayer; but faith is as much our own act as prayer. The *power* to pray and believe is from the Holy Spirit; but that power is often within our reach, is at the door of our hearts, and we perceive it not, or fail to exercise it. When the mind rests upon the atonement and promises of God, takes hold of them, trusts itself to them—this is believing. In this way, pardon, sanctification, perfect love, and all the blessings of grace are received. Thousands of wandering Israelites live long in the wilderness, after they have come to the side of Jordan. But this barrier to our inheritance is crossed in a moment, when the soul gets about the work of believing. This work is easy to him that doth it. A man who throws himself into the sea, finds no difficulty in the act itself, but in persuading himself to do it: so with the soul that throws itself into the ocean of divine mercy by faith. Say you *will* do it *now*, and the die is cast, the mind believes, the mountain is removed, you are in the sea of mercy, and there you find salvation!

8. Growing in grace implies a gradual progress of the work of God in the heart. This is the case with the repenting sinner, the

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justified, and the sanctified. The whole of our pilgrimage to heaven, from our first setting out to seek the kingdom, implies this progressive work. But there are certain points in the narrow way, at which the work of the Lord is instantaneous: viz. when a sinner is pardoned, a backslider forgiven, or a believer wholly sanctified. This view of the subject is given by every Methodist writer, either in Europe or America, whose works have come to our knowledge: and there is no evangelical sect that we know of who deny this point, in relation to pardon: but respecting an instantaneous, complete sanctification, there is some diversity of sentiment. For the sake of those who dissent from us in this particular, a few arguments will be given in favor of the doctrine of instantaneous, complete sanctification. 1. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples (probably about one hundred and twenty in number, Acts i. 15.) were *all filled with the Holy Ghost*, Acts ii. 4. They were therefore emptied of sin, were wholly sanctified. But we have no evidence that they were so before that time; we have strong reasons to believe they were not. It seems, then, they were, at least most of them, wholly sanctified on the morning of that day: as it was before the third hour of the day (Jewish time—nine o'clock our time). 2. The apostle prayed God to "sanctify the Thessalonians wholly, and preserve them blameless" after they were so sanctified. There must have been a time when this work was completed, and therefore an instantaneous change. 3. The same argument holds in relation to perfect love. There must be a time when our love is perfected, or there can be no such thing as perfect love. And the time when we are made perfect in love is the period when an instantaneous change is wrought. 4. The blood of Christ "cleanseth from all sin." When the soul is cleansed from all sin, in that moment an instantaneous change is experienced; for if the work is completed at all, there must be a time in which it takes place, and that time is the moment of a great and instantaneous deliverance. 5. "Our old man is crucified." We may be dying to sin for weeks, but there is a moment when we are first dead to it, or when it expires. The metaphor is plain. A man may be long dying; but there is a moment when he ceases to live, and becomes dead: so it is with our corruptions. 6. Matter of fact establishes this point. All whom we have ever known as witnesses of perfect love, were able to state the time and place in which God wrought this work in their hearts. Either, therefore, we must take the bold ground of infidels, and deny this work in its brightest witnesses, or accede to their testimony, which proves an instantaneous work. 7. Those who deny the instantaneous work, do not, as far as our observation extends, usually attain to entire sanctification. We might perhaps admit rare cases, as exceptions to a general rule, and say, a few give evidence of regeneration, and of complete sanctification, who cannot tell the

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moment, or the hour, when these blessings were received. But we apprehend this is not the case with one in ten of those who are either regenerated, or wholly sanctified. 8. Those who admit the doctrine of an instantaneous and entire sanctification, if they seek it with all their hearts, do receive it. It is unto them according to their faith. These considerations, we hope, will satisfy those who have no desire but to find and walk in the truth.

9. We ought frequently to examine ourselves, in order to know as correctly as possible, the spiritual state of our souls. There are tempers and exercises, which sufficiently indicate our condition, whatever it may be. How shall we know what to pray for, unless we ascertain where we stand, and what we need? The evidences of conversion are, *peace* with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; *joy*, produced in the heart by the Holy Ghost, in view of what he hath done and will do, in and for us; *faith* in the word and promises of God, trusting in them, and acting accordingly; *light* in the understanding, whereby the sense, divine excellency and beauty of the Scriptures are opened to our view, and spiritual subjects generally are explained; *brotherly love* towards ALL Christians; this implies esteem, union, and affection; *philanthropy*, love to all men; this includes forgiveness of enemies, a desire to do good to all; and a vehement desire for the conversion of sinners; *power against sin and temptation;* the unconverted are carried away as with a flood by sin and the devil: although they see their condition, and know they are going to perdition, yet they are led captive by Satan, at his will: but the converted sinner has power, through faith in Christ, to resist and overcome sin and temptation, however violent the assaults of the enemy may be; *victory over the world* through faith; overcoming its snares, riches, honors, and pleasures: these are the gods of sinners, but not of Christians. Whoever has these tempers and exercises of mind is born of God.

10. There are also distinctive evidences of a growth in grace among regenerate souls. Such are, a conviction for more sanctification, hungering and thirsting after it; diligence and earnestness in the public, social, and private means of grace; conscienscious punctuality and faithfulness in all their duties, whether civil, moral, or religious; a vigorous, healthy tone in their graces generally; in their faith, hope, love, zeal, seriousness, self-denial, humility, &c.; laboring much and sincerely for the salvation of immortal souls; meekness under provocations; patience under sufferings; firmness in temptations; a continuance and increase in brotherly love, notwithstanding occasional temptations to an opposite spirit; humbly and solemnly rejoicing in God. It would seem that Christians might as certainly know from these data, whether they are really growing in grace, as they can know the state of their bodily health. The life of God in the soul

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of man is as manifest as any moral subject whatever; and the strength or degree of that life, as well as its increase and decrease, is distinctly marked by corresponding fruits and evidences.

11. But to follow this part of the subject still further, we may notice the signs of entire sanctification, and a complete renewal in the image of God. The first in order usually is, *a peace that passeth understanding*—a profound and heavenly calm, after all the tumultuous raging of temptation and corruption, and the agonizing of the soul for deliverance. This might naturally be expected to follow, when our inward foes are all expelled, as the first perceptible evidence of so great a change. There is also *entire resignation* to God in all things; the will is entirely parallel to God's will, so far as that is understood; and the constant language of the heart is, "Thy will be done." *Faith* is now perfect; no unbelief is mixed with prayer. The soul credits all that the Almighty saith; she hangs on his everlasting truth, power, and goodness, knowing that these are as immutable as his eternal existence. *Freedom from evil emotion of the heart* is now experienced. If they are commended, it does not awaken pride; if injured, it provokes no resentment; if afflicted, their patience is not disturbed; if others are gay and trifling, they feel no corresponding levity of spirit; but on the contrary, pain for the sinfulness they witness. They are often, and violently assaulted by the prince of this world, but he finds nothing in them to take with his temptations: it is like striking fire into water; it will not kindle. Such "*rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.*" They are always happy, though wading through sorrowful trials, because they look at their future inheritance. They hang upon God by faith every moment; which they could not do but in a praying spirit. They thank him for trials, which, though grievous to nature, they know will work for their everlasting good; they give thanks at all times, and in all things. They have *constant communion* with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; their whole life being an uninterrupted service of God, and all their desire being unto him; their affections fixing on none but the supreme fountain of good, and only in a subordinate sense loving friends, life, or any thing else. The Triune God leads, comforts, dwells in, and in mercy communes with them, as he does not with the unregenerate, nor with any less devoted spirit. They are conscious of *possessing a power to live wholly to his glory*, at all times and in all things. They eat, drink, labor, rest, pray, hear, read, converse, and whatsoever they do, to the glory of God. This is their object, and through grace it is attained. The *abiding witness of the Spirit* attends the full enjoyment of perfect love. This is an impression upon the heart; a clear, direct testimony of the Spirit to the mind, that we are now children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. In connection with this

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is the *full assurance of hope*; an unclouded prospect of a blissful immortality, founded upon the Scripture promises, applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost. But all this light, life, and holy fire in the soul cannot be retained long without an *open profession of God's work.* The entirely sanctified must let their light shine; or, were it as refulgent as that of an archangel, it would soon end in darkness. The order of God is, that wherever he does a work, the glory of it shall be his: therefore the soul that loves him entirely, honors him by declaring what he hath done. Perfect love to God implies *perfect philanthropy.* The souls of all men now appear exceedingly precious, and the wholly sanctified are constantly engaged in prayer and other Christian efforts to do them good, to promote their spiritual and everlasting good. In a special manner do they pray and labor, that the ministers and church of God may be holy, as he who hath called them is holy.

12. Abundant as this measure of grace is, it admits of improvement; hence the exhortation in our text is applicable to holy souls. The mind is ever expanding, and a vacuum will soon be felt, unless a constant increase of this blessed work is experienced. Evidences of such an increase are not extraordinary gifts of speech, or intellect, or outward prosperity, nor a high reputation for piety; but a daily death to every thing but God and holiness; an increase of faith, hope, and love; of humility, simplicity, seriousness, meekness, gentleness, courtesy; loving brethren and sinners more, as they love us less; being overlooked and neglected by the world, and by half-hearted professors; a constant travail in spirit for the salvation of souls; taking God for our All, the Bible for our ONE BOOK, the Spirit for our only Comforter, Christ as our only Righteousness, Providence as our only and ample Patron, heaven for our everlasting home:—not mistaking bigotry for zeal, false for true impressions, false for true professors, names and shows for religion, desires for possession, error for truth, or earth for our home. The souls that grow in entire sanctification sometimes long for glory. The thin veil between us and immortality is occasionally lifted by our faith and the manifestations of God to the soul, so that we have a desire to go over to the other side of Jordan, and see that good land of promise. But such desires are always tempered with perfect resignation.

Such are the evidences of a growth in grace. They are so numerous and intelligible, that every Christian may understand the subject.

II. *We shall enforce the exhortation to grow in grace by various considerations.*

1. This exhortation is given by an inspired apostle. Whatever authority divine inspiration clothes a person with who speaks in the name of God, Peter possesses when addressing Christians in the text. It is the Holy Ghost speaking through him, rather than the language

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of a mere man. The authority of God the Spirit accompanies this exhortation. Therefore, all who fear God and believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, will feel that his authority binds them to "grow in grace."

2. But if we examine this subject attentively, we shall perceive that Christians can never maintain consistency of character, without going forward in the divine life. The ebb tide of nature and adverse winds of temptation set against them, so that they will drift away from God, holiness and heaven, unless they continually labor to gain all the grace and glory they can. Without this there will be many sinful short-comings, much unfaithfulness, and back-slidings, either open or secret, which destroy all consistency of character. What can be more inconsistent than for professed children of God to be constantly offending him; professed heirs of glory entangling themselves with this world; avowed enemies to sin occasionally falling into it; haters and opposers of Satan parleying with him, and listening to his suggestions. Therefore, if we would have any consistency and propriety of character, we must grow in grace.

3. Without going forward in the divine life our spiritual consolations will be small, and at times scarcely perceptible. All past attainments only aggravate our present state, if God is not with us *now;* and it is only when we are urging our way onward, that we can think with pleasure and profit on the former loving kindness of God to us. Thousands, who once rejoiced in God, are now pining on the dark and barren mountains of unbelief, with scarce a ray of hope or crumb of heavenly manna to keep them from despair. They may indeed be filled with Antinomian dreams of "once in grace always safe," and lull their minds with the syren song of "unchanging love." But actual, divine consolation is only found by obedient faith. In the exercise of this the soul advances in grace, and has foretastes of the heavenly rest, which cannot be found by the dilatory and wavering Christian.

4. Not only does the happiness of believers depend on their progressing in religion, but also their usefulness. This is equally true in respect to private and official members of the church, and ministers of the sanctuary. Learning, wealth, talents, a profession of religion, or a small degree of grace, will never make a man as useful to his fellow men as a high degree of sanctification, and a constant growth in grace.

How many have begun well in religion, and entered on a career of great usefulness; but by apostacy, or lukewarmness, have put an end to their valuable services, and in some cases have done more harm at last than ever they accomplished to benefit society. He, therefore, who aims at usefulness in the church, and among men generally, should aim at a constant growth in grace.

5. We live in an age abounding with infidels, and sinners of every rank and shade. The errors and sins of the times are great; they

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are taking deep root, and spreading their branches wide all over our republic. An efficiency of character among Christians is requisite to meet this alarming case. In spite of all the professions and faint efforts of unsanctified and unregenerate professors, infidelity and superstition may overrun this land of liberty, may fill it with anarchy, despotism, and every species of misery: Christians, therefore, should be awake. They should be armed with more than mortal strength, even with the power of the Holy Spirit. They should perseveringly grow in grace: then God will make them an impenetrable phalanx, against whom Satan and the "man of sin" shall wage war in vain.

6. Christians in general have family connections, to whom the God of nature has joined them in the strong bands of natural affection: conjugal, paternal, filial, fraternal, and other ties of nature bind us together. If one in the circle becomes a Christian, how great are his motives to diligence, that he may save the rest. But he will do them no good—he will rather be an occasion of their stumbling into perdition—unless he himself grows in grace. The influence of men upon one another, and especially upon relatives, is astonishing. Sometimes it appears as though one had only to say the word, and others will go on in the way of sin and death. This influence is as potent in other matters as in religion. It is a mighty engine of Satan, whenever he can give the current an evil tendency. But why not turn this power of consanguinity, this flow of natural affection, to the best account? Why not use this influence to draw our friends into the way of wisdom and eternal life? Whether we shall do it to the utmost of our power, depends chiefly on our own progress in holiness. What fearful responsibilities lie on unfaithful Christians! O brethren, awake to this awful subject! See that your lukewarmness does not ruin you, and many around you, who would have been saved through your instrumentality, had you been faithful to God!

7. Stability and perseverance in religion depend upon growing in grace. All the backslidings of apostates originate in hesitating to go forward in grace. As the tide comes to a stand before it ebbs, so the waters of life do not leave the soul till checked by our heedlessness and unfaithfulness. In the common course of vegetation, a tree does not wither and die till it first ceases to grow. Beware then, Christians, of this fatal *standing still:* it is the harbinger of spiritual death, which may result in death eternal. We are safe no longer than we grow in the knowledge and love of God.

8. God is pleased sometimes to chasten the unfaithful with troubles in domestic and temporal things. In these they seek for happiness; and it seems to be an instance of the divine wisdom, that thorns are planted by his providence, where they seek to raise their chief happiness on forbidden ground. Had these persons chosen the Lord for their portion, and only made a sanctified use of earthly enjoyments,

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they might have avoided many troubles. All the good in inferior things may be innocently enjoyed; but when these become idols; when God, and holiness, and heaven are neglected; then, in judgment and in mercy, he pours sorrow into our hearts. Jehovah delighteth not in afflicting the children of men: therefore he will bless us with all the temporal and domestic blessings which are consistent with his glory, and our own highest good. Let us therefore grow in grace, and it may add much to our happiness, even in the things of this life.

9. The union and prosperity of the Christian church depend on her advancement in holiness. The history of past ages demonstrates, that outward aggrandizement is no security against spiritual death, nor temporal deprivation an effectual barrier to inward prosperity. Under the ten persecutions in the first ages of Christianity, God's people shone in all the dignity and excellency of his holy religion; and when the papal beast made war against the reformers, a degree of light blazed forth among them, which had not been witnessed for many centuries. From the days of Constantine, the Roman church has been surfeited with temporal prosperity; but spiritual darkness and death have been the consequence. Divisions, jealousy and strife often arise from a want of grace; but were all Christians to forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto the things before them in their spiritual course, what harmony, spiritual life and true prosperity might they enjoy! Heresies and schisms often blast certain portions of Zion, which never would be the case were all believers going on to perfection in holiness.

10. Peace and consolation in death will be secured, or forfeited, according as we obey or neglect this exhortation. Lukewarm professors are often surprised and confounded at the approach of the king of terrors. Their souls' affairs are in a deranged state, and they are unprepared to stand before their final Judge. Even while "the Bridegroom cometh," they have oil to buy, their lamps to trim, and to obtain the wedding garment. Ah, foolish virgins! Upon how many such will the door of heaven be shut! Not so the wise. These are found ready, and waiting for their Lord. At whatever time, and in whatever place or form, death approaches, it is to them "the gate of endless joy," nor do they "dread to enter there." Having faithfully served Christ in life and health, and proved his power, his love and promises to them, in many ways and innumerable instances, they now walk through the valley of the shadow of death supported by his presence, and joyfully trust him for their future well-being.

11. The vast work of repentance, faith, reformation, and preparation for eternal blessedness is all to be done within a very short time, since our remaining days are few; therefore we should *make haste* to grow in grace. Have we said, and felt, and done many sinful things? we must repent. Have we lived in unbelief, either total or partial?

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we must now believe with all the heart. Have we been unfaithful? now is the time for reformation. Surely we do not expect to dwell with God and holy angels, if we are not purified from sin, and perfected in love and holiness: and yet this year, this month, yea, before to-morrow, we may be called to render up our account. We have no time to lose. Did we know the exact length of our life, how few years, or even months would remain to many of us! Let us therefore "make haste, and delay not" to grow in grace; that we may "be holy, as he who hath called us is holy."

12. If we finally arrive at the mansions of bliss, the measure of our reward will correspond with our degree of holiness on earth. What a field is here opened for the most pure and elevated ambition! Worldlings toil and endure many hardships, to gain honor, riches, ease, and fickle friendships; and shall not the heirs of glory be enterprising? Transgressors labor hard in the ways of sin; and shall not the men of God apply all their energies in the cause of piety? While they are skilful in enticing souls to the way of death, shall not we be wise in winning them to the path of life? Surely if there is any thing in the universe worthy of our utmost exertions, our most generous sacrifices, and patient endurance of sufferings, it is that immortal crown of righteousness laid up for the faithful. If, on the morning of the resurrection, saints will differ in their degrees of glory, as the stars in our firmament differ in brightness, and this variety depends on our various attainments in purity on the earth, let us endeavor to grow in grace with all possible diligence and perseverance.

13. The main question—whether we shall apostatize or not, die in Christ or in sin, stand or fall in the day of judgment, be saved or damned for ever—will eventually turn on this point, whether we grow in grace. By lukewarmness, neglect of duty, yielding to unbelief and other sinful tempers, we hedge up our own way to heaven, and break down the barriers of mercy between us and the pit of wo. Idleness is out of the question. We must go forward, grow in the knowledge and love of God, and thus work out our salvation; or retrograde, lose the light and life of grace, after all we have done and suffered for God, become a prey to our enemies, make shipwreck of faith, and fall into perdition.

Improvement.

1. How ought we to admire the infinite mercy of God, which hath called us, poor, sinful worms, to so high and holy enjoyments, and enforced the gracious call by so many, various, and powerful motives! We are invited to rise from the groveling passions and pursuits of fallen nature, to the purity and dignity of saints, to the everlasting enjoyment of God in his kingdom. Our true interest, happiness, honor, and every worthy motive, urge us to accept the divine invitation. We are invited and urged, not merely to venture our bark on the sea of infinite

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love, but to "launch out into the deep," where the richest treasures of gospel purity abound; where union and communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ever enjoyed. We may not only bathe, but swim in this immeasurable ocean. As navigators find the greatest danger in the vicinity of a coast, and the inhabitants of a country are most exposed on its frontiers; so Christians in the shallows of religion, or just within the bounds of our spiritual Canaan, often meet with troubles which do not occur to the more experienced and devoted. Therefore it is our wisdom to obey the voice of the Lord fully, to follow him by implicit faith.

2. But let us not be deceived. Neither our age, standing, reputation or influence in the church, or before the public, is a sure test of our state before God. He seeth not as men see, nor accepteth the person of any. Men may undervalue or overrate us. There is One who judgeth righteously. Before him we must all soon appear; and it behoveth us to try our hearts by his word, to see what is wanting in us, and make it our only business to please him. Who will now attend to this? Who will be a Christian altogether; neither ashamed of any part of religion, nor afraid of any suffering for Christ? Our age and nation abound with professors; but who will rest in nothing short of entire sanctification? There are multitudes of pretenders to Christianity around us; but who will deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the Lamb of God in all inward and outward holiness? The times call for such Christians, that they may be witnesses for God before an erring and sinful world.

3. Finally; let those who are engaged in this holy work be contented with its present fruits and future rewards. If they endure unto the end, they will soon exchange their labors and sufferings for glories that are inconceivable and without end. Let the careless professor tremble; for the symptoms of spiritual death are upon him, and the harbingers of final ruin are approaching with fearful rapidity. Let the unregenerate take warning, by the greatness of the Christian's work, to begin it in season, or calculate to lose heaven and reap the wages of sin for ever. Let those who are called to labor in the Lord's vineyard not neglect their own souls. We are individually to be judged. Talents, labors, success in our ministry, will not be substituted in that day for personal and perfect conformity to the image and will of God. And as what we do for others must be soon accomplished, for the night of death is near, let us improve the time, by instrumentally saving as many as we can.

May the Holy Spirit inspire all our hearts, that we may grow in grace while in this state of probation, and eventually reap our reward in the kingdom of eternal glory. AMEN.

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SERMON XXV.

BY REV. RICHARD WATSON,
LONDON.

Delivered at the City Road Chapel, October 17th, 1830.

EZEKIEL'S VISION EXPLAINED.

EZEKIEL I. 1.

NOW IT CAME TO PASS, IN THE THIRTIETH YEAR, IN THE FOURTH MONTH, IN THE FIFTH DAY OF THE MONTH, AS I WAS AMONG THE CAPTIVES BY THE RIVER CHEBAR, THAT THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED, AND I SAW VISIONS OF GOD.

EZEKIEL was among many Jews who were carried away captive, several years before the general captivity, into the land of the Chaldeans; and whilst Jeremiah, in Judea, was predicting a storm which would finally desolate its city and temple, Ezekiel was employed in the same service among the captives by the river Chebar. But his prophetic visions respected many other countries besides Judea; he predicted the conquests of Egypt, Amalek, Edom, with other neighboring states, all of which fell under the sanguinary march of the Babylonian monarch. The spirit of prophecy opened to him still more distant scenes, and his eye glanced over all those changes of nations which have been taking place from that day to this, and which shall still take place, until the concluding part of his prophecy be accomplished, till the vast temple, the enlarged church of God, shall be built, and all nations shall flow unto it. To prepare the prophet for these scenes and revelations, emblematically to present to him the principles of the divine government, and the agents which are employed in it, whilst he was among the captives by the river Chebar, about two hundred miles distant from Babylon itself, he was inducted into the prophetic office by a most sublime and impressive vision. A

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whirlwind came out of the north; a great cloud; a fire enfolding itself. Living creatures appear, bearing the appropriate emblems of the cherubim. The vast wheels of a mystic chariot come into view; flashes of lightning; "careering fires between;" the voice of the Almighty; the noise as of a host; the appearance of a throne, and one sitting upon it; and a firmament clear as the terrible crystal; this, as he tells us, was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; and when he saw it, he fell upon his face. The sublime machinery which enters into this prophetic vision was designed to enunciate great truths; truths, however, which terminated not with the prophet's day; truths which reached to us; and, though we should not be able to enter into all the depth of the meaning of these extraordinary symbols, nevertheless they contain points of obvious and impressive instruction. They do so at all times; but perhaps the vision of this chapter may be considered as peculiarly appropriate to the circumstances in which we, as a nation, now live; for we live in an age of change and tumult; subverted thrones call the attention of the world by the sound of their fall; the earth is unquiet; the floods lift up their hands; society is urged into new and rapid tides, the issues of which none can well predict, and which fix the thoughts of the most discerning and profound minds. But, in the midst of all this, shall we see nothing but man? Is there not a God that judgeth and ruleth the earth? There is; and the design of such visions as that, which this chapter contains, is especially to lead us from earth to heaven, from visible agency to invisible; in one word, from man to God, that we may fear before him, and put our trust under the shadow of his wings. I shall, therefore, call your attention to the well known vision of this chapter, a vision which may be epitomized as a representation of the march of God in the chariot of his providence, through the successive ages of the world; accompanied with his angels, who excel in strength; his ministers, which are as a flaming fire; arrayed in his own fearful majesty, and his own tremendous glories; and yet, at the same time, commingling these fearful glories with the milder displays of his condescension and love.

This vision, to which the first verse is introductory, has three leading parts. The vision of the living creatures, or the cherubim; the vision of the wheels; and the vision of the throne, and him that sat upon it. We have,

I. THE VISION OF THE LIVING CREATURES.

A whirlwind came out of the north, emblematical of the sweep of invisible agency, which carries away that which appears most firm upon earth; a great cloud, always portentous of the divine judgments; fire enfolding itself, striking its fearful beams in every direction behind and before a milder and a brighter color round about, to intimate the

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calm which shall finally succeed, and the more beauteous revelations which shall finally be made to our world; and then, out of these appearances, we are informed, "came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance—they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings, on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces; and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward; whither the Spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps; it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned, as the appearance of a flash of lightning." Two remarks upon this part of the vision seem to be suggested to us.

The first is, that *God in part carries on the affairs of the government of this world by the ministry of angels.* I know that in this infidel age all these supernatural interpositions are scoffed at as below the wisdom, but, in fact, above the folly, of human philosophy. This, however, is the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures from the beginning to the end; the whole Bible is full of it. When God excluded our first parents from Paradise, he set a guard of cherubim there, to keep the way to the tree of life. When the patriarch had committed the direction of his way, and the keeping of his interests to God in prayer, he was favored with a vision of a continual intercourse of angels between heaven and earth. When the first born of Egypt were smitten, it was by the hand of a destroying angel; they are ministers of judgment as well as mercy. When the Assyrian host perished, it was by the stroke of the hand of a being of the same order. When our Lord was to rise again, angels rolled away the stone from the sepulchre. When apostles were to be delivered from prison, an angel was commissioned upon the errand. The whole of the machinery of the book of Revelation is constructed upon this principle; continually they are bursting from the darkness and obscurity of the invisible world, and appearing as the high commissioned ministers of God. Why such beings are entrusted with such a commission, we know not. Why they are appointed to protect and keep the righteous, and to

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mark or destroy the wicked; how, on a larger scale, they assist the counsels of nations, and in judgment often perplex them; how they quell the feelings of collective bodies of men, and how they raise them up into indescribable energy; how they control the elements, alter the seasons, and make use of inferior beings as the instruments of accomplishing the purposes of God; how all this is, we know not, but such is the doctrine; they are all the servants of God, and they are all joined to the chariot of his providence. All their powers are consecrated to this service. They four had the face of a man, intimating intelligence; of a lion, intimating courage and strength; of an ox, intimating laborious perseverance; and of an eagle, intimating high, and rapid, and sustained flight. They stretched their wings, ready to execute their commission; when they received it, they executed it with the resistlessness and rapidity of lightning. They turned not when they went; never deviated from the command they had received, but went straight forward; and then, says the vision, they returned and let down their wings, waiting for new commands, and the voice from the firmament above, again to run, and return, and wait; a beautiful emblem, my friends, of the way in which we, in our lower sphere, ought to serve God, with wings outstretched, ready to act, with unhesitating adherence to the rule of God's revealed will; whilst, having derived strength from immediate fellowship with God, we should carry that strength into action, and then return, and abide again with God, and derive strength for other and higher services. So God "maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."

But the second thing which this suggests to us is, that *this subserviency of angels, in all their energies and powers, to the purposes of the Divine Providence, is but emblematical of the subserviency of every other agency to fulfil the purposes of God.* "Behold," says one of the sacred writers, viewing the planetary and stellar system, "behold, all these are thy servants!" And so it may be applied to every creature upon earth, to every element of nature, and to every being. Wherever there is wisdom, "the face of a man;" wherever there is courage and strength, "the face of a lion;" wherever there is laborious perseverance, "the face of an ox;" wherever there is the power of a high and sustained flight, "the face of an eagle;" whatever quality there is in creatures for judgment and mercy, for good or evil, willing or unwilling on their part, conscious of their employment or ignorant of it, "all these serve him." They all stand with their wings stretched; health, sickness, life, death, quiet, trouble—wars, pestilence, famines—their contraries—all stand ready to execute his commission; all go straight forward in it; all return and let down their wings, and wait for new orders from the voice from the firmament above. Behold, all these are the servants of God; they accomplish the purposes of his justice and his mercy. My friends, what practical conclusion can we

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draw from this, but the necessity, the blessedness of friendship with God? If God is against us, who, then, shall be for us, when the whole universe of creatures, and of circumstances, do his will, and serve his purposes? And if God be for us, who, then, can be against us? "When he giveth quietness, who can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him, whether it be to a nation or to one only?"

In this prophetic representation we have—

II. THE VISION OF THE WHEELS.

The wheels are described as having the color of a beryl, the color of the azure heavens; the beautiful emblem of unbroken uniformity, as well as unclouded majesty; as being involved in their structure, a wheel within a wheel; as having rings so high that they were dreadful, and these rings were full of eyes round about them four. These are the great wheels of the majestic chariot of Providence.

In the first place, as wheels, they intimate to us *the various changes and revolutions of earth.* For, as it is by the motion of wheels that the chariot is propelled, so it is by the changes of earth, so to speak, that the Divine Being marches through time to the accomplishment of his vast and great designs. That there have been such changes by which the designs of God, in former ages, have been accomplished, we know; accomplished, too, both in judgment and in mercy; when he has punished ancient proud nations; when he has interfered to destroy idolatry; when he has delivered his church, or placed it in the furnace of affliction; when those mighty wheels have been turned over all the high pride and glory of ancient states; they drove over the pride of Egypt, and of Assyria, and the four successive monarchies, and the crash of many more modern ones is still in our ears. But these changes must go on. We conclude this from the ultimate designs of God in reference to our world. We know what these designs are. His design is that truth, the truth of the gospel, shall be freely and universally proclaimed; that Christ shall be universally believed on and adored; that the justice and purity of his religion shall influence all the institutions of society; that all public vice shall be suppressed; that all public oppression and wrong shall be removed; that all nations, in a word, shall be blessed in him, that is, in Christ; that is, be brought into a happy condition in him, or by the influence of his gospel. Now, if such be the firm and settled purpose of God, what changes must take place; and necessarily so! If his truth is universally and freely to be proclaimed, then all intolerant and persecuting powers must bow beneath his influence; if error is to be universally banished, and truth to reign triumphant, what will become of the factious, apostate,

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infidel, and anti-Christian crew, raising their systems of error, dark as the smoke of the bottomless pit, if possible to blot out the sun of heavenly truth? If principle and right are to go through every part of society, what changes in the low as well as in the high ranks; in private as well as in public life! And if all oppression and wrong are to be put down, what shall become of those combinations of men who endeavor to rivet for ever the fetters of the slave, and otherwise to deface the sacred image of God in man by their pride and their cruelty!

But let us not mistake; all these changes are not to be violent and tumultuous; that is the mistake of many. The turning of these wheels is not always in judgment, not so often in judgment as in mercy, though often terrible in judgment. There are milder and more gradual, though not less powerful and beneficial, changes than any of these,—than the altering of the external form of society,—the change of dynasties and the different adjustment of the balance of power among nations. There are the mild and beneficial changes produced by the arts, by sciences, by education, by commerce, by civilization, but above all, by the revival of the religion of Christ in old countries, and the introduction of that religion into new. The revival of religion in this country has produced infinitely greater, more permanent and beneficial results than if there had been a revolution every month. By its revival and extension, changes have been produced; silently it may have been, but not on that account less really; more vast, and sublime, and permanently beneficial, than would have been produced, though this world's dynasties had been changed from generation to generation. But still, after all, if men will build up some proud tower against the Lord, if men will cement it with their interests and honors, if they will identify themselves with it, if they will take their chance with it, whoever they are, then there shall be the sweep of these mighty wheels, and God shall overturn it and them too. If they will not hear the call, listen to the voice of God, yield to the evidence of those principles which his word contains—as its light and principles are streaming forth in various ways and through various channels in society—they must be prepared for all these things. But there is a voice from the Lord to his church; "Be still, and know that I am God!" Let the men of the world enter with all their ardor, with passionate feelings, into all these things; but let the Christian know his duty: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted on the earth."

The second particular, as to these emblematical and mystic wheels, is, that *their form was involved.* Their motion would often appear perplexed, and even retrograde; and yet, it is added, with so

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much emphasis, twice or three times in the vision, that "they went straight forward; whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not when they went." We are instructed by this how to interpret various intricate and mysterious providences, both as to ourselves and the world. The form of the wheel is often involved, the motion of it intricate and perplexing, and in some instances apparently retrograde. "All these things are against me," said Jacob; till at last he could bear a different testimony, how straight-forward the wheels of a beneficent Providence had gone in his case, when he acknowledged that the angel had redeemed him from all his adversities. Doubtlessly a similar feeling must have impressed Joseph; wherever he turned, the wheel seemed not only intricate and perplexed, but even in opposition to the general direction in which a vision had informed him the providence of God would proceed; until he at last found that the road to honor was humility, and that the affliction of Joseph was the salvation of the family. So there are many other interesting scriptural examples of this. And then, as to nations, are not the Scriptures full of examples also in this respect? And I would refer to these interesting examples, because they were put into the page of the infallible record, in order that they might be so applied. Take, as a remarkable instance, the case of the Israelites, after God had, with a high hand, brought them out of the land of Egypt. You naturally would have thought that he should have carried them straight-forward through the wilderness, especially as you find them on the very brink of Jordan, and that they should have immediately possessed the land; not so—they are all turned back again, and are made to continue in the wilderness for forty years—so intricate were the motions of the wheels, and apparently so retrograde; yet how straight-forward was the whole proceeding! The intentions of God were to cut off, in the wilderness, that generation which was infected by the idolatry of Egypt, being unfit to bear his name among the Gentile nations of Canaan, and to prepare a new race, trained up by his own holy discipline, to establish his worship, and to proclaim him as the only God to the heathen. And the end was answered.

Now, the reason why we are so often perplexed with God's designs, as to nations and to ourselves, is because we can see a little way only as to the bearings of many parts of God's works upon others; the compass of our observation is small—our field of vision contracted; we see things in part—we see them separate from each other—we see the beginning; we can hardly connect it with the past; and, as to the future, all is dark. But the designs of God are lofty, and reach far. This is intimated to us by the form of the wheels; "They were so high that they were dreadful"—producing a feeling

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of awe from their height, such as we feel when we are surveying the high expanse of the heaven above us. Such was the form of the wheels. As to individuals, from the beginning of time till the end of time, from eternity to eternity; and such as to nations, from the beginning of time to the end of time; they comprehend all things in their sweep, so vast, and so majestic and sublime. This is the reason why we are perplexed. But let us recollect that, notwithstanding, every thing is going straight-forward, and that the wheels *turn not as they go*. If thou art a man of God, be of good cheer, trust in the Divine Providence; every thing in God's dealings as to thee is going on to the final glorious issue of thy salvation; thy complete, and perfect, and exalted happiness and salvation; there is no variableness nor shadow of turning; the motion is straight-forward. And I am one of those who believe that it has been so from the foundation of the world. God, subordinating every thing to the counsel of his own will, has been making every thing bright and dark—every thing forward in its movement, and every thing apparently retrograde in its movement—to accomplish more fully and illustriously his great and glorious designs. The apostle, referring to this view of the subject, which had so highly excited his admiration, in the close of the eleventh chapter to the Romans, speaking of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, has these remarkable expressions, "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

But there is a third particular in this description of these mystic wheels—*They were full of eyes round about*—the whole circle of them. Now, it is not difficult to interpret this very natural and very instructive emblem. Surely it teaches that every thing is directed by an infinite intelligence;—that there is an end, a design, in every turn of Providence; that there is an eye that looks to something in every thing. Our revelation, you know, excludes all chance from the affairs of the universe. Let them take the comfort of it who can find any comfort in chance. But our Bible excludes all chance, from the least to the greatest; it presents us with a view of the divine government, in which there are no unmeaning acts, in which every thing is influenced by wisdom, and every thing controlled by justice and mercy. "The wheels have eyes round about;" therefore, whatever part of them is turned towards us in the dispensations of the Divine Providence, these eyes are there; and whatever part is turned as to nations, there are eyes there; there is an end and a

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design, and to know that is a great part of the practical knowledge of man. In the turnings and changes of this mighty providence of God, have your hopes been frustrated, and your plans blasted? there are eyes there; there is an end, to which it looks, of instruction, admonition and reproof; lessons deeply important and eternal for you to learn. Have these turnings brought about some unexpected deliverance, some signal mercy? there are eyes there; there is a reference to some great practical end, to quicken thy zeal, to rouse thy gratitude, and to make obedience the effect of an increasingly excited gratitude. Have the turns of these wheels raised you to some circumstances of greater honor and influence? there are eyes there, too; there is an end. New talents are committed to thy trust, and for the five as well as for the two, and for the two as well as for the one, account must be given to God, and all these are to be consecrated and employed in the service and for the glory of God. Have these wheels driven over and crushed many of your comforts and best earthly interests? there are eyes there. Perhaps the whole design has not been manifested; there may be some mystery still; but thou art called, by this dispensation, from earth; thou art reminded that this is not thy place. Have these wheels, instinct with divine wrath, turned on some careless, sinful man, and swept him away in his wickedness? there are eyes there. This is a solemn and impressive warning to others; admonition against delay, and against saying, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee." What Christ says unto one, he says unto all, by the consideration of the uncertain term of human life: "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

And it is so as to communities too. All the advantages which God may give by the various turnings of his providential dispensations to nations, and all the judgments which he may bring upon nations, whether for correction or for destruction, as the case may be, there are eyes there; ends to be answered, lessons to be taught; nay, so plain is this supposed to be by the prophet, that he complains: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see!" There is so wonderful an indication of approbation of piety in every blessing, and an equally striking indication of reproof of sin in every judgment, the correspondence between sin and the punishment, and the duty and the blessing, that the man must wilfully be blind who will not perceive that there are eyes in the wheels, and that they are approaching continually the same great end. I would conclude this part by just observing, how sublime a view of the divine government is thus presented to us by this revelation! That in all the dispensations of God to nations, or individuals, there are wise intentions, important designs; that the object of them all is something practical,

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and that we may say of Providence, just as we say of the revelation of God, that it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

We come now to a point on which our time will not permit me to dwell, and the particulars of which I must run over, merely to suggest a few topics for your subsequent meditation. This extraordinary vision refers to—

III. THE THRONE OF GOD, AND HIM THAT SITTETH UPON IT. "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon this likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it."

Mark, my friends, what is said in the first place of *the appearance of the firmament*; its color was "bright as the terrible crystal." It was "*above*"—this machinery below; on earth there was a cloud —the fire flashing from the darkness, and then returning into the darkness again; noise and tumult, and every thing that was perplexing, and dark, and terrific; all above, "bright as the terrible crystal:" to instruct us in this great truth, that whatever may be dark in these earthly scenes to us, is all light to God; that both as to our individual way, however perplexed, we may say, thou knowest the way that I take; and, with respect to the world we live in, God dwelleth in light; all his dispensations are in the light to his own mind; and that with him there is no darkness, and can be no error at all.

There was *the appearance of a throne*. One throne and one ruler, because the doctrine of our revelation, so important, is, that every thing is governed by one power, one will, one infinitely perfect God; and thus every believer is led to that great resting place—"The Lord reigneth." The Lord reigneth, though the earth may appear never so unquiet; the Lord reigneth above the water floods; the Lord reigneth King for ever. What rest did the ancient saints find there! and what rest may we find there, amidst all the changes and troubles of life! "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" therefore, although the earth remove, we will not be afraid. Oh, "happy are the people that are in such a case!" may this happiness be yours!

But the two points on which we should have dwelt longer, had we been permitted, are those which follow: That on this throne there was as *the appearance of a man*. Now, when Moses and the elders saw the glory of God upon mount Sinai, it is expressly told us that they saw no similitude of any kind. Why? God was then giving his law, a law which had no direct respect to redemption, or to the

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incarnation of our Saviour; all, therefore, was majesty and justice, right and authority. There was no similitude there. But if there is a similitude here, in connection with this great part of the providence of God, what does it teach us, but that there is a reference to the incarnation?—what does it teach us, but that it is Christ, to whom all power is given in heaven and upon earth, the incarnate God? So that there are two great doctrines of Scripture in reference to the government of the world; the first is, that it is governed by God; the second is, and a most interesting doctrine to sinners, that it is governed by God-man Mediator; that he who died for us governs us. Such is the ground of trust as to the Christian, and of hope as to the world. Now, this doctrine throws light upon two or three points; it shows us how it is that there is so much mercy mingled with man's misery. That there has been misery in the world; great misery in nations, and in the case of individuals; that individuals bear the marks of the divine displeasure in their afflictions, diseases and mortality, we know and feel too well: and yet, as to nations, God never left himself without a witness, however wicked they were, but sent them fruitful seasons, and did them good, filling their hearts with food and gladness; and then, as to individuals, there is health as well as sickness, enjoyment and comfort as well as affliction. How is this to be explained? If man be in favor with God, how do you account for his miseries? If man be under wrath, unmingled wrath, how do you account for his mercies? Account for it, my friends, you cannot, but upon the principles of the text; there is the appearance of a man upon the throne, the man who died for us, who satisfied the claims of divine justice in our room, illustrating and accounting for the fact, that, though man be under condemnation as a sinner, still he is redeemed, and the object of mercy. Take another case. How is it that God's judgments are connected with repentance? Why do they yield upon the sinner's repentance and faith? My friends, strict law does not admit of this; and yet such is the fact. If, "when God speaks concerning a nation, to pluck up and destroy, that nation repent, and turn from its wickedness, God shall repent him of the evil which he thought to do." And, if a single man, who is under wrath, humble himself under the mighty hand of God, there is an ear which receives every sigh of repentance, and there is a hand to administer pardon to the humble and contrite. How is this? There is the appearance of a man upon the throne, which, terrible as it is in some of its demonstrations, is sprinkled with atoning blood; and, though there is wrath, "let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto God, and he will be merciful unto him, and to our God who will abundantly pardon." The invitation is to you all, for there is a man upon the throne. And then it goes

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to illustrate another point; and it is, that since the government of the world is in the hands of a Saviour, the final issue, the grand design of that government, both as to individuals and the world, is salvation. It is so as to you. You may turn it, by unbelief, and carelessness, and wilful rejection of Christ, to another issue; but blame not the bowels of the Deity. God rules you to save you; and it is a delightful doctrine, as to a good man, that he is put under the administration of Christ on a course of discipline, and that every thing becomes a means of grace to him. Not merely the sabbaths of God, not merely the ordinances of God, not merely the means of grace, as we call them, directly so, not merely the visitations of the Spirit, in the communion of saints, and a thousand other direct and blessed means of spiritual edification; but there is a covenant betwixt his soul and every thing; and all things are "to work together for good to them that love God." Every thing is a process in the great discipline, to strengthen principle, to quicken affection, to make the man of God perfect, to fit every man for his place in heaven, the place which God designs him to fill in the beautiful order of the hierarchy of heaven above. What a reason to rejoice in the benefits, and to bear with patience the troubles, of life! There is a man upon the throne; one who was troubled, who bled and wept; a priest "touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." And so it is as to the world. The great design is to save the world from the power of Satan, and to set upon it the crown of glory and of purity. And this is further indicated to us by the fact, that *there is a rainbow upon the throne*, the sign of the original covenant, and, therefore, made the sign of the covenant of grace. Similar imagery is employed by St. John, likewise, in his Revelation. There is a covenant; and, as the rainbow shines upon the darkest cloud, so upon the clouds of the present state shall the Christian see this radiant sign of the divine mercy, the covenant which God has made with you—"I will be to you a God, and ye shall be my people." It is upon the darkest cloud, fraught as the cloud may be with thunder, and flashing, as it may sometimes, with lightning, and pouring as it may, descending floods; yet the sign of promise and of peace is upon it. Oh, thou troubled Christian! look up, and in the darkest scene rejoice in the government of God, and in this bright attractive sign of his gracious covenant. And so, as to the world and the church, remember that the sign of the covenant is still upon it; never give way to desponding thoughts; the rainbow is upon the cloud; God will remember his covenant, it is the sign of retiring tempests and a coming calm.

And what shall we learn from the whole? As I said before, to

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seek above all things the favor and the friendship of God. What is all other friendship without this? As I said before, to listen always to the voice of the promise, and to observe the eye of the wheels whenever they turn towards us, and however they turn; to get into the church of God, which he engages to carry safe through the waves of this world, and which he will conduct, finally, into the haven of everlasting peace; to get here, through him who sitteth upon the throne, an interest in all the perfections and gracious plans of a reconciled redeeming God, that it may be well with us now, and well with us to all eternity! God grant that, through the riches of his grace, and through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, these everlasting blessings may be yours, and to his name be praise! AMEN.

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SERMON XXVI.

BY REV. ENOCH MUDGE,
IPSWICH, MASS.

Preached in Portland, Me., June, 1829, before the Maine Conference, previous to the ordination of Elders for the work of the ministry.

THE SAFETY AND PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH.

ISAIAH XXXIII. 6.

AND WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE THE STABILITY OF THY TIMES, AND STRENGTH OF SALVATION; THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS HIS TREASURE.

THIS encouraging language was spoken in reference to the peculiarly distressed state in which the church and people of God were involved. It strongly indicates the care of God for his people. That he would not fail them; but that he would inspire them with proper qualities of mind to endure or improve trial, and raise suitable means for their stability, safety and prosperity. The Lord is exalted; he dwelleth on high. He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times. The times were indeed troublous. Sennacherib the Assyrian monarch is represented as the treacherous and oppressive enemy of God's people. And the prophet addresses him in an elegant apostrophe, reproaching and denouncing him for his unprovoked and ambitious disturbance of the repose of nations. "Wo to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled, and dealest treacherously, and they have not dealt treacherously with thee. When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." In the midst of these calamities the valiant ones shall cry out, and the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The sinners in Zion shall be afraid, and fearfulness shall surprise the

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hypocrites. The enemies of the church shall be dashed as a wreck on the shore; but the pious shall dwell as in a sure place of defence. Supported by the Lord, their hearts shall meditate terror with perfect serenity. Not one of the stakes of Zion shall be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. The people therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. The fear of the Lord is their treasure. They who have the blessings of the divine favor, have greater treasures for their support than the riches of the Indies. Their peace shall be better secured than it could be by the wealth and arms of empires. The prophet addresses himself to Jehovah, expressing his confidence in the divine government, his hope for the deliverance of the church, and of its happiness and prosperity; his blessing in filling it with piety, wisdom and knowledge; and strength of salvation. The doctrine of the text is, that true piety, in union with wisdom and knowledge, is the best and only security of the peace and prosperity of the church of God.

I. We shall attempt to establish and illustrate the doctrine.

II. Endeavor to show by what means these qualities may be the most effectually promoted in the church to secure its safety and prosperity.

III. We shall proceed to apply the subject with reference to the present occasion.

I. We are to attempt to establish and illustrate the doctrine of the text, *That true piety, in union with wisdom and knowledge, is the best and only security of the peace and prosperity of the church of God.*

The fear of the Lord is but another name for true piety. This is the beginning of wisdom. It is that holy reverence of the divine majesty and glory of God, which deters from evil; and that filial sense of affection for him, which brings the soul into a dutiful submission to him. Hence, the fear of grieving him, and the desire to please him, become the prevailing principle of a pious mind. This induces watchfulness against evil, and an earnest seeking for grace to serve and glorify him in spirit and in truth. Well, therefore, may this term be used, to express the general disposition and habit of piety; as it excites all the affections, and moves them into a holy correspondence with the divine nature and attributes of God, as our Father, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and everlasting Friend.

It brings the will into conformity to the will of God. The understanding is employed in all the various branches of knowledge of God, and his word and will. It directs the heart into dutiful love to, and a delightful enjoyment of him. In this is embodied the

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heavenly treasure which believers have in earthen vessels, even while in this tabernacle of clay. The fear of the Lord is his treasure. This is essential to being the members of the mystical body of Christ. From his fulness they all receive the heavenly gift which unites them to him their living head, and to each other as his spiritual members. This piety is the principle and bond of their union in the household of faith. It is the strong cement by which, as living stones, they are built up as a spiritual temple in the Lord. It is the unction of their consecration to the holy priesthood, by which they continually offer acceptable sacrifice to God. Wisdom implies the ability to perceive what is fit and right to be aimed at as the great end of our existence, to glorify and enjoy God, as the only way to secure peace and tranquillity in our own bosoms, and in all the circles of civil and social life, in which, by the providence of God, we are destined to move. It is that prudence and discretion which discern what is right and fit to be done, to avoid evil and attain good. It comprehends that general intelligence, or commerce of information, that has reference to the nature and fitness of things, with regard to the nature and end of moral action. It discerns the fitness of time, place, manner, motive, and instruments of accomplishing our designs. If we should here make any distinction between wisdom and knowledge, we might say that the latter refers more particularly to experience, by which we acquire a direct and practical acquaintance with the truth, and more especially with the results arising from the use of the most proper means which wisdom has selected to attain the desirable end.

This is the wisdom that cometh from above. It is the gift of the Father of lights, with whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He imparts it by revelation to those whom he has made intelligent and accountable beings. It is by his own word and Spirit that we are made wise to salvation. It is the union of these qualities of piety or fear of the Lord, with wisdom and knowledge, that forms a consistent and useful character. Such characters stand as lights in a benighted land, holding forth the word of life. Such are the children of wisdom, the children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation.

2. Wisdom and knowledge imply a view of the nature and design of their union in the church as the body of Christ. The nature of their union being spiritual, the end and design of it is to attain spiritual advantage.

My kingdom, said Christ, is not of this world. The design of being united in it, therefore, is not to attain worldly advantages, but spiritual blessings. They who are truly taught of God know the unspeakable privilege of being united in the fellowship of the gos-

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pel. They are social in their natures. They know they have the same wants, weaknesses, and trials; that they must derive their help from the same source, in the only way of divinely appointed and prudential means of grace. They are taught by experience that "two are better than one," for they have a good reward for their labor.

3. The pious and intelligent have a clear discernment of the doctrines, discipline, ordinances and order of church government, as means for its edification and growth in grace. Where people are destitute of this knowledge, though they may be sincere, and have a zeal, but not being accompanied with a knowledge of the grand principles of a holy life, it will be like a dazzling, flickering flame, which "leads to bewilder, and dazzles to blind." A just view of the doctrines of revealed religion, with the evidences by which they are supported, are the sure foundation of a pure and spiritual religion, that has God for its author, and his glory for its end. The moral discipline, ordinances, and order of church government, are the rational principles and helps to a holy and useful life. They are the directories, guards and landmarks of the Christian. On an attention to these depend his own peace, and the church's prosperity.

4. This knowledge leads Christians to a just estimate of the value of the privileges they enjoy as the means of growth in grace. By living in a habitual use of divine ordinances and prudential means, they are enabled to judge, from experience and observation, of the just value that is to be attached to them; therefore they are careful to transmit them to succeeding members, as the means of the union and prosperity of the church, and of securing it from outward enemies and secret foes. Frequent social religious meetings are of inestimable value to preserve the life and power of religion, and spirituality in the body.

5. This wisdom and knowledge direct the church to a selection of her most pious, judicious and gifted members to fill official places, and to perform special duties for its service. These constitute much of the riches, strength and defence of the body. Whenever these are called into the service of the church, they contribute to advance her best interest. A church may be wealthy, its members may possess worldly influence, and be ranked among the honorable of the earth; it may be defended in its outward form by the civil power; but it may, in the eyes of the Lord, be like the Laodiceans, poor, blind, naked, and have need of every thing spiritually good and valuable. But if its members be pious, intelligent, and experienced, the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. It is then like the well formed, healthy body, with a good constitution, a wholesome

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diet, proper exercise, in a free air. Every member then partakes of the vital, invigorating energy; performs its proper functions, and enjoys in itself, and with its fellow members, the comfort and pleasure of a happy existence.

6. This piety and prudence lead the members of a church to avoid occasions of divisions, to cure them when they occur, and to cultivate a spirit of love and union. Any division is like an evil disease, which gives pain to the body; and if one member is wounded, all feel the sympathizing pain. The cause and cure are immediately sought. Piety cannot be an indifferent spectator to the prevalence of sin and error. Wisdom promptly suggests the remedy; experience teaches the happiest mode of its application. Thus proving the stability of the times and strength of salvation.

7. Whenever this spirit of piety is thus united with a godly exercise of wisdom and knowledge, it tends to increase the prosperity of the church by an increase of members. We will go with you, for the Lord is with you, is the language of such as behold this amiable spirit of piety, brotherly love, and carefulness to preserve the body in the beauty and order of the gospel.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. They are beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners.

These qualities tend, above all, to promote the prosperity and safety of the church, by securing the favor and approbation of its great and powerful Head, who is able to defend it from all the assaults of earth and hell; and to give it prosperity, when all sources of human help are dried up; when the powers of darkness muster their forces of infidelity, error, flattery, and persecution against it.

Let these observations suffice to establish and illustrate the doctrine of the text. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.

II. We will now endeavor to show by what means these qualities may be the most effectually promoted in the church, to secure its safety and prosperity.

Many of you, my brethren, have undoubtedly anticipated much of what I shall say on this part of my subject. It is natural to expect, if the question were asked, "By what means can such a state of piety, and such qualities in the church, be most effectually promoted?" many would doubtless be ready to answer—By a pious, intelligent, faithful and efficient ministry. This is undoubtedly correct.

The gospel ministry is a divine institution, having the glory of God, and the salvation of men for its general object. The nature

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of the duty which it devolves is a divine service, to which men are specially called of God, to spread the knowledge of revealed truth, as made known in the Holy Scriptures; to open and recommend the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; to gather men into the church and edify the household of faith by the truths of his revealed will and the ministration of the ordinances of the gospel; to perfect them in knowledge, experience and holiness; to fit them for his heavenly kingdom, that they may be presented as a chaste spouse of Christ, without spot or wrinkle, adorned in the beautiful garments of salvation, and made meet to be partakers with him, of the inheritance which he has gone to prepare for them in glory.

The call to this work is from an immediate impulse of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, which, in concurrence with such circumstances in the order of providence as go to produce a clear conviction in the mind of a person of his duty to engage in the ministry, from considerations which only respect the glory of God, and upon motives which aim at nothing but the good of the church and the salvation of souls. The first indispensable qualification for this high and holy work is personal piety. Without an experimental and practical acquaintance with the truths of the gospel, no man, whatever may be his natural or acquired abilities, is qualified to teach sinners the way of salvation, and meet all the cases of the flock of God, as a faithful physician and good shepherd. Piety, however, of itself, without wisdom and knowledge, is not a sufficient qualification for a teacher of righteousness, and guide, guardian and watchman over the church of Christ.

We are carefully to guard against the two errors by which the church has, in all ages, been afflicted. The first is, that learning and science are sufficient qualifications for the ministry without piety. The second is, that piety of itself, is all that is needed as a competent qualification for that great work. By the first, the church would be led to a popular conformity to the spirit of the world, and to be content with the form, without the power of godliness.

By the second, she is in danger of superstition and wild disorder. Both piety and learning are to be regarded as qualifications in their proper places. To personal piety, and a clear conviction that God hath called him to the ministry, there must necessarily be joined a competent knowledge of the language he is to use to instruct men in the way of salvation. A clear and comprehensive view of the doctrines of the gospel of our salvation, in their necessary connection and dependencies; together with the various classes of evidence by which they are to be proved and supported; a readiness of communication, or, in other words, a gift of instruction, to awaken, comfort and edify souls; never forgetting that the unction of the Holy Spirit is always needful to give success to all efforts made for the

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accomplishment of the grand end of all ministerial labor. Zeal, firmness, tenderness, constancy and fidelity, are all indispensable requisites to a faithful and efficient ministry. The love of souls and an ardent desire for the glory of God are to be kept constantly awake, and in vigorous exercise in prosecuting the holy work. When the knowledge of languages and human science are joined with these essential requisites, the man of God is qualified for more varied and extensive usefulness. It is by such a pious, devoted, and efficient ministry that the prosperity and security of the church are promoted.

2. *It is by paying an early and suitable attention to the rising generation, to train up a godly seed to become the future members of the body of Christ, that its best interests are to be increased and secured.* We, my brethren, are passing away as the shadows that glide over the plain. The places that now know us will soon know us no more for ever. Another generation must shortly fill our places as members and ministers of the church of God. Our children must, therefore, be trained up for him. They must be guarded against error, and restrained from sin. They must be taught the fear of the Lord, and be instructed in ways of righteousness. We must begin with them in the nursery, continue our instruction in the family circle, provide for them at the school, and lead them to the house of God, that they may be brought under the hallowing influence of the gospel. The minister of God has much to do in training these young immortals, in whom are centred the hopes of the church and of the world, to fill all the useful, honorable and important offices, for their future prosperity and happiness. To the ministry we look to give direction and encouragement to sabbath school and Bible class instruction, and to establish libraries; to elicit and satisfy inquiry; to draw forth and assist the energies of the mind; to implant and cultivate wholesome principles; to spread before them the beauties of holiness, and allure them to the love and service of God; to leave the savor of divine knowledge, and the deep impression of a holy example, that they may rise up and copy these living patterns as they have followed Christ. The minds of youth must be cultivated with science and all useful knowledge, that they may become intelligent and judicious in the exercise of their piety, that they may justly discriminate between truth and error, between what is essential, and what is not. Being thus instructed, they will be equally removed from an ignorant, superstitious bigotry, and a latitudinarian liberality which retains little of Christianity but the name.

3. In order that such a state of the church may be promoted as is referred to in the text, it is important that suitable care be taken

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in the admission of members to its communion, and the enjoyment of its privileges. They should be carefully instructed into the nature and obligation of their duties as members of Christ's outward kingdom. God made it the imperious duty of the Israelites not only to instruct their children in the principles and obligations of the moral law, but into the nature and design of their institutions, as memorials of his mercy, designed to keep them separate from the rest of the world, as his peculiar people. "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say to thy son, The Lord hath brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand," &c. Proselytes also were to be instructed in the doctrines, duties and ordinances of the Jewish church, before they were admitted to its privileges. All the members of that church, who bore about them the badges of their holy profession, were taught that these were to guard them from idolatry, and to preserve them in the fear and obedience of the Lord. Num. xv. 38—40.

Christ also was careful to state the terms of discipleship to all his followers, in the most clear and explicit language. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Here we are instructed that the service of Jesus Christ must be a voluntary act of a moral agent. No force, nor improper influence should be employed to induce persons to make a profession of the Christian religion, and to join themselves to the church. Wherever this is done by any sect, or individual of a sect, it is unchristian conduct, and deserves severe reprehension. Christ loves the volunteer in his service. And the church can only receive a firm and exemplary support from such as, from the convictions of conscience, and decisions of judgment, enter her ranks. They must be instructed that self-denial is an indispensable requisite to the character of a follower of Christ. That they are to come out from the world, renounce its spirit, and not be conformed to its practices.

Neither is it enough that they be taught to be negatively good, to do no harm; but they must take up the cross, take the yoke of Christ boldly, and profess Christ and him crucified; acknowledging the authority of his doctrines, submitting to his ordinances; obeying his precepts, and following his example. They must put on Christ, and make no provision for the flesh. And this must be continued at all hazards. "For whosoever is ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels." "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

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Professors of religion should never imagine that, by becoming Christians, and members of a church, they are freed from any of the civil, social, or relative duties of society. They are to render to all men the duties and services of their relative conditions. Religion imposes her highest and most solemn obligations on persons of all ranks. Men are to serve God in the several states wherein they are called; and to do their duties as a service to him, in singleness of heart and with a ready mind.

A proper knowledge of these holy principles of religion will induce a spirit of subordination, condescension, sympathy, and mutual good will, which are the brightest ornaments and strongest cords of society. But all who unite in the church are to be taught the special duties which devolve on them as its members and brethren in the same household of faith. None are to excuse themselves as having no share in the promotion of its prosperity. They place themselves in the church, that they may receive the watchful attention, friendly admonitions, and affectionate counsels of their brethren. It becomes each individual to be deeply sensible of how far he is interested in administering to his brother, as well as receiving from him, this labor of Christian love. Were Christians personally and individually faithful in these respects, there would be few occasions for the more public exercise of the discipline of the church. When the first symptoms of disease appear, the friendly hand of a father or mother, brother or sister in the church, might administer a remedy which would prevent, or remove a disease that, if neglected, may baffle the ablest physician, or require the operation of the boldest surgeon. A knowledge of our own weakness and infirmity should teach us moderation, candor and tenderness; and a consciousness of our own wants should teach us to exercise benevolence to others, to afford them the same brotherly assistance which we feel would be beneficial to ourselves. Thus would they strengthen "the band of love, a three-fold cord, which never can be broken."

4. There are some particular states in the church to which a special attention is to be paid for the promotion of its highest prosperity. Not only is the young convert, the babe in Christ, to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby, but he is to be guarded against the most common causes of stumbling and offence. While the father and mother in Israel are to rejoice in every appearance of the sincerity and piety of the younger members, they should take special care not to expect or require the exercise of maturity in judgment and discretion which may be justly expected in age and experience. And on the other hand, while they are careful not to discourage, let them be equally so, not to kindle and increase a spark of pride, by an indiscreet mention of their gifts and attainments. They must also avoid undue partialities, lest they ex-

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cite jealousy, envy and division. But the sick, infirm, and aged are to have a special attention paid to them by the private and official members of the church. Let not those, who have borne the burden and heat of the day, be forgotten or neglected.

If the nation is taxed with ingratitude who neglects its military and naval heroes; if you censure in the severest manner the master who leaves his enfeebled and worn-out slave to perish; if your heart rises with a just indignation against a son that suffers his parents to languish out their lives in penury and want, by what language will you express your sense of the criminality of a church of Jesus Christ that neglects its sick, aged, and impoverished, suffering members? What! shall an aged Christian, a child of God, whose travail of soul has given birth to many sons and daughters in Zion, be neglected by their brethren, when they can no more toil and labor for themselves and others? It must not be. That church cannot prosper that does it. The Lord will visit such with his displeasure. They must have a double portion of the prayers, visits, sympathies and labors of the church. It is a debt of justice. It must be repaid. Those who are the most faithful in discharging this debt of love are often abundantly enriched by their visits. The aged saint frequently brings out of his treasury the most valuable information to strengthen faith, confirm hope, enkindle love, inflame zeal, increase patience, and animate to obedience, so that the visitor is twice blessed; blessed in giving, and in receiving the consolations of his holy religion. The intelligence and experience are brought again into the church, and prove, in times of difficulty and need, the strength of salvation

The poor are to be sought out and relieved. The heart of the widow and soul of the bereaved are to be cheered by the fruits of charity and brotherly affection. The evil consequences of neglecting the poor, and partiality in administering the alms of the church, occasioned the greatest trouble to the apostles. But the piety, wisdom, and prudence of those holy men took measures to remedy the evil, and to restore love and unity among their brethren. The fear of the Lord was their treasure.

5. The cultivation and exercise of a spirit of ready and cheerful liberality in the support of the gospel, and in meeting all the pecuniary calls for the advancement of the cause of God, are indispensable for the increase of piety and spread of useful knowledge, and for the happiness and stability of the church. Though religion is the gift of God, we are required to use means to attain it ourselves, and to spread it among our fellow men. Ordinarily the prosperity of the church may be expected to keep equal pace with the cultivation and exercise of this spirit among its members. While we disclaim all merit in works, and especially in the absurd idea of purchasing the favor of God with money, we know, for he hath declared

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it, that the "liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered. Covetousness is idolatry. God loveth the cheerful giver. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully." In the exercise of a cheerful and ready mind to meet the calls of the church, Christians show their sense of moral justice and religious gratitude, as well as benevolence. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust in much. The grateful soul inquires, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his mercies?"

Having reaped spiritual, he is ready to bestow carnal things, to secure an invaluable treasure of piety and intelligence to the church, which may prove its strength of salvation.

It is time that we proceed in the

III Place, TO APPLY THE SUBJECT WITH REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT OCCASION.

The candidates who are now to be set apart to the ministry, and ordained elders in the church of God, have seen what an important bearing this subject has on them, in reference to the future discharge of their ministerial duty. In your late examination you have given satisfactory evidence of personal piety, of your call to and qualifications for entering into this holy office. Your official standing in the church will bring you into a close connection with all that tends to increase her richest treasure, to promote her highest prosperity, and to increase her most permanent stability and security.

Yours is to be a reasonable and benevolent, important and pleasing, difficult and responsible labor, which, if faithfully performed, however men may regard it, cannot fail to be acceptable to God. You may have a great sense of unfitness for the work, and a deep consciousness of utter unworthiness to engage fully in its holy and responsible duties. Yet, trusting in him who has not called you to go a warfare at your own charge, you may humbly and boldly venture to go forward.

1. In offering yourselves, body and soul, talents and influence, to the honor of God, you perform but a reasonable service. Having received all your powers and means of improvement from him, they should be employed for his glory. Having been redeemed by Christ, you are his, and to obey him is your reasonable service. Having been renewed by the Holy Spirit and nursed up in the church, it is most reasonable to consecrate yourselves to be its devoted servants. It is a debt of gratitude you owe, for the foretastes and pledges of eternal life with which you have been favored, and reason demands

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that you cheerfully discharge it. All the duties of your Christian profession and ministerial office are rational, and become those beings who are possessed of talents of the highest order, and are capable of the most exalted employments in the service of the King of glory; in advancing his kingdom among his rational and accountable subjects. This service is to be performed with all the rational powers, as is fit for those who are under infinite obligations to him who honors them with such a holy employment.

2. Yours is a benevolent work. It originates in the benevolence of God to sinful men. To call sinners to repentance and gather them into the church, and edify them as the spiritual members of his body, is a work of the greatest benevolence of which the human mind is capable. It is the imitation of him who went about doing good to the bodies and souls of the needy and perishing. To this benevolent employment, to which we can set no limits, it regards no distinctions; it reaches to every case and condition of man.

3. It puts in requisition all the talents, fills all the time, employs all the means afforded. It has reference to time and eternity, to the persons and characters, to the happiness and usefulness, to the safety and salvation of men. It is to promote piety, diffuse the knowledge of spiritual things, to preserve the church as a godly seed in the world, and to people heaven. The Saviour of men has connected it with his own work of redeeming and saving men. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, workers together with him, in spreading the knowledge of salvation, and in plucking sinners as brands from the burning, and bringing lost prodigals home to their heavenly Father's house, to partake the joys of his salvation.

4. It is, therefore, in many respects, a pleasing work. When Ezekiel was commanded to eat the roll, and St. John the little book, they were sweet in the mouth as honey. It is a sweet and delightful thing to contemplate the messages of redeeming grace to a perishing world. It is a sweet and precious perfume that the ministers of Christ pour forth to the fainting, longing soul, that is waiting for the salvation of the Lord. It is delightful to dwell on the love of God to dying men; on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself that we might live; on the effusions of the Holy Spirit shed abroad into the hearts of hungering and thirsting souls; on the balm of Gilead, that gives life to the dead; on the balsam of the Saviour's merits, which gives health and peace to the broken heart, and assuageth the anguish of the wounded in spirit. O, it is precious to speak of the help laid on one that is mighty to save the feeble, tempted, weary, heavy laden soul. Oh! yes, it is delightful to preach the offices, work and grace of a Redeemer. The pious are cheered when the promises of the gospel are opened, explained and applied

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Their hearts are comforted, when the joys of salvation flow through the preaching of the doctrines of justification, sanctification, adoption and the final redemption of the body from corruption by Jesus, who "is the way, the truth and the life." The poor, persecuted saint leaps for joy, when assured that the kingdom of heaven awaits such; when they are told that the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on them; that great is their reward in heaven. It is pleasant to accompany departing saints, when gathering up their feet to obey the welcome summons of their Lord to come and live with him in glory.

5. Yet, amidst these pleasing scenes, you must not forget that it is an arduous work. Who is sufficient for these things? Surely every minister of Christ, who has just views of the greatness and difficulty of the work; the high, the deep, the extensive, the various subjects involved in the discharge of his ministry; the awful responsibilities of his office; the consequences of infinite moment, arising from its discharge, will say, We are not sufficient of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. It is his comfort, that he who hath called him does not require him to go a warfare at his own charge. He is fully furnished with the matter of all his instructions, and may rely on grace to help in every time of need, for a right, faithful and useful discharge of his duty. The ambassador of Christ is entirely dependent on him for all that relates to his mission and usefulness. He has nothing to originate. His doctrine is not his own, but his who sent him. He is also equally dependent for success. How humbling is the consideration that he cannot produce one serious and godly purpose in the hearts of his hearers; that he cannot soften and change the heart of one hardened and careless sinner; that he cannot impart comfort sufficient to cheer the soul of one mourner in Zion; nor give evidence of acceptance to one anxiously distressed inquirer. No, nor of himself, can he sanctify one believer who is intensely longing for full salvation. Here, my brethren, you see your sufficiency is all of God. Whatever natural strength of intellect, or however great the fund of acquired knowledge; and though you had the gift to speak with the tongue of men and angels, you were still insufficient for this work without the grace of God to sanctify these qualifications, and to accompany the use of them to produce the awakening, conversion and salvation of souls. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

6. The work of the ministry is a highly responsible work. They watch for souls as they that must give an account. They receive their awful charge from God to declare his whole counsel. Whether sinners will hear, or whether they will forbear, they must be fearlessly and faithfully warned to flee from the wrath to come, and

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escape the damnation of hell. There is a fearful responsibility attached to the character and duty of a watchman in Zion. His is a work that might fill an angel's heart, and did employ a Saviour's laborious hands. Yes, my brethren, as spiritual watchmen you are to instruct the ignorant, warn the wicked, check the froward, stir up the lukewarm, encourage mourners, feed, guide and guard the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. This will call you to be instant in season and out of season, to rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine; knowing that you and your hearers are hastening to the great tribunal, where joys unspeakable or woes inconceivable await you as the result of fidelity or neglect.

Finally, my beloved brethren, whatever opinion man may form of your motives and labors, if faithful, the Lord of the harvest will certainly be with you, give you success, and finally give you the tokens of his everlasting approbation.

He hath already given us sufficient success to encourage our hearts in this glorious work. The time and circumstances of my entering into elder's orders are fresh in my recollection. There was a sense of pensiveness and loneliness of feeling, which spread itself over the mind, which it would be difficult for any one at this time to conceive, and much more for me to express,—being that year stationed in the province (now state) of Maine, where the whole number of members of the M. E. Church was less than 300, and now you have about 10,000. Since that time every member of this conference, except one, has been admitted into the ministry. At that time the whole number of members in the U. S. was about 46,000, and now they amount to more than 447,000.* How greatly has the Lord of the harvest multiplied your circuits, stations, ministers and members. Then there was but a single meeting-house of our order in this state; now, how greatly are they increased!

These things should encourage you. Verily, you have not run nor labored in vain. Should we dare to look forward the same number of years to come, and indulge the hope, that a proportionate success should attend the future labors of those who are, and may be, raised up, what a glorious prospect would present itself to the mind! Who would dare predict such a state of the church? And yet, why may you not hope for it? Has not the Lord said "Lo! I will be with you, even unto the end of the world?"

This must be acknowledged to be a great and glorious work of God. It has not been by might, nor by power, of a worldly kind. We have to acknowledge a divine agency in raising up instruments

* There has been considerable increase in the church since the above calculation was made. It is supposed that there are now more than 500,000 members.—Ed.

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for this purpose. They have been such in many instances, as the wise men of this world would not have selected. Nay, many of them would have been set at nought and despised by such builders. But God hath blessed them, while in labors they have been more abundant.

While you duly appreciate the labors of your pioneers, we are happy to find you also feel the importance of an increasing degree of intelligence and experience, to fill the stations and discharge the pastoral duties of the ministry in churches composed of all ranks of pious and intelligent Christians, gathered in by your instrumentality. In this you are judiciously endeavoring to keep pace with the order of God.

This subject is highly interesting to the church in general, but in our application of it, is more especially so to the church of which we are members. It is our practice, on these occasions, to inquire into its spiritual state and prosperity,—the means proper to be used for its future advancement and security. Our peace and spiritual prosperity are identified with hers. Her interests, stability and security are our glory and joy. The members of the body to which we belong know that we have but one interest in common with theirs, in the means and measures pursued. Our spiritual interests and comforts must be derived from the same source, in the use of the same means with theirs. A regard to the same doctrines and moral discipline is equally necessary for us all. It is hers to judge of the gifts, graces and usefulness of candidates for the ministry. She, who is to be served and edified by them, recommends them; and on her must they rely, under God, for future countenance, approbation and support. They are her servants for Jesus' sake. We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. Whether we travel on circuits or districts, or labor in stations; whether we study or visit; whether our time be employed in Sabbath school and Bible class instruction, or preaching the word, it is for your edifying. For you the talents and vigor of the prime of life, and the maturity and experience of age, are all employed. And, that you may have a more general and equal edification, we submit to the inconvenience of change, and remove from place to place, having no certain dwelling-place, relying entirely on your piety and sense of justice and ability for our support. How solemn and important, then, must be your duty, as individuals, to posterity, as well as to the great and increasing body of which you are members. Endeavor to get a deep and abiding sense of the value of personal piety, and especially of the attainments which the doctrines you profess should encourage you to expect and seek. Study closely that part of the subject which relates to the wisdom and knowledge before alluded to; and espe-

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cially the means by which it is to be promoted in the church for its future and lasting good.

Let ministers and people engage with one heart and one soul in the glorious work. Let us be faithful to the grace already given, and, in humble dependence for future assistance, go forward for new and higher attainments—for greater and more extensive conquests, until death shall be swallowed up in victory, and the redeemed of the Lord shall be brought where

> 'Triumphant glories deck their brow,
> Immortal songs their triumphs tell;
> There with fresh ardor shall they glow,
> With truth immortal dwell;
> No tyrant death molest the smiling plain,
> But boundless freedom hold an everlasting reign!"

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SERMON XXVII.

BY REV. FITCH REED.

Preached in Middletown, Conn., July 4, 1831.

THE INFLUENCE OF MORAL PRINCIPLE, SECURED BY EARLY CULTURE, ESSENTIAL TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 46, 47.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, SET YOUR HEARTS UNTO ALL THE WORDS WHICH I TESTIFY AMONG YOU THIS DAY; WHICH YE SHALL COMMAND YOUR CHILDREN TO OBSERVE TO DO, ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW.

FOR IT IS NOT A VAIN THING FOR YOU BECAUSE IT IS YOUR LIFE; AND THROUGH THIS THING YE SHALL PROLONG YOUR DAYS IN THE LAND, WHITHER YE GO OVER JORDAN TO POSSESS IT.

To contemplate the perfections of Jehovah, as they are traced out in the workmanship of his hands, and the footsteps of his providence; to study and acknowledge our dependence and obligation to him as our Creator and Benefactor; to become reconciled to his character, and conformed to his moral image, and thus be prepared to exalt the praise of his glorious grace, in our future and interminable existence; this is the great business of human life, and well becomes us as rational and responsible beings. It is due to the God of all our mercies, and stands inseparably connected with our present and eternal well-being.

We cannot cast our eyes abroad upon the face of nature, without discovering evident tokens of infinite intelligence, power and goodness; and in the passing events of Divine Providence, how clearly do we distinguish the finger of God, pointing out that mercy which prompts, and that wisdom which directs, in all the operations of his hands. Every advancing step in the history of God's dealings with man, reveals new wonders in his economy, and calls for higher notes of admiration and praise.

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Every revolving year sheds richer blessings upon our guilty world, and awakens new emotions of gratitude and pleasure in the heart of the Christian and the philanthropist. Every returning period which repeats the song of our country's freedom, swells a new chorus to the praise of our fathers' God. More and more are we convinced that the bloody struggle of our patriot sires, which eventuated in giving liberty to the millions of their favored posterity, was under the superintendence of Almighty power, and directed for the accomplishment of wise and gracious purposes in regard to our country, to the church and to the world. And while our bosoms glow with feelings of the most ardent patriotism; while, as a people, we glory in the freedom of our civil and religious institutions, let us remember that American liberty, though great and important in itself, is but a single link in a chain of events, which will reach to the end of time, and involve the moral condition of unnumbered millions.

Our national existence and civil liberty, which were proclaimed in the first declaration of our independence, have been the admiration of the world. Nations have wondered, and we have wondered ourselves, that our fathers, so few in numbers, and so feeble in comparison of the brave and gigantic power which opposed them, should so completely carry into effect their noble purposes of victory and freedom. What was it that gave success against such fearful odds? What was it that nerved a single arm against a thousand foes, and unfurled the banner of national independence over the very battle ground of European prowess? It was the Lord of hosts. It was the arm of the mighty God of Israel stretched out for the defence of this land, and the accomplishment of those gracious purposes, which have since been developed in the progress of civil and religious freedom.

While, therefore, we venerate the memory of our patriot fathers, who struggled in the sanguinary conflict, and gaze upon the monuments which tell the hapless fate of those who fell upon the blood-stained soil of freedom; while we teach our children the wonders of former days, infuse into their minds the spirit of generous patriotism, and transmit to them the precious boon of liberty, let us cast our eyes beyond all this, and lift our thoughts, and bow our hearts to that Almighty power which achieved our victory, and made us what we are. To acknowledge the hand of God in all this; to render him all the praise of our wonderful deliverance, is a sacred and indispensable obligation. To rejoice in any other way in the favors which distinguish us; to carouse in the abundance of our blessings, and forget the source whence we derive them, is an abuse of our liberty, a dark stain upon the escutcheon of our country's freedom. It is this, more than any thing else, that endangers our safety. If the eagle of American liberty should ever take its flight from our

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shores; if God should ever curse this land, and give it over to the reign of anarchy or despotism, the cause will be found in our nation's ingratitude.

National favors demand national thank-offerings. It becomes us, in our associated capacity, to pay our vows to our heavenly Benefactor, and render to him our united praise. Nor can we conceive it improper to celebrate, in a public manner, the birth day of our country's freedom. The Jews were commanded to commemorate their wonderful deliverance from Egyptian bondage; and one of their most important and strikingly emblematical festivals annually reminded them of this gracious event. Let the sentiment prevail; let the feeling dwell in every heart, that we are under the government of God; that to him we are indebted for all our civil and religious advantages, and that our safety and happiness are inseparably connected with national gratitude and virtue; let this be the character of American freemen, and they will remain freemen still; they will delight to assemble at the house of God, and offer the grateful homage of their hearts. We deprecate, we sorely deprecate the practice of making this day a time of riot, and the joy of fools. It is the destruction of those very principles in which we professedly rejoice, and betrays our liberty into the hands of the veriest tyranny.

It is to inculcate other principles, and give to the mind a different bias; it is to guard our precious rights from such insinuating and destructive evils, and preserve entire the inheritance purchased by the blood of our fathers, that we properly make this day a religious festival, and assemble with our children to renew our solemn covenant with our heavenly Father, and strengthen those bonds which unite us together as brethren. Be this, then, a day of sacred joy; when but one feeling shall pervade the breasts of our citizens; when the difference of political partisans shall be unknown, and the spirit of religious sectarism unfelt. On this day, emphatically, we are brethren; united to offer an undivided sacrifice of praise, and pledge to promote one common cause.

I repeat the sentiment, that the independence of our country is but a solitary link in a long chain of important events. When we look at the eventful period of our nation's birth; the political and moral condition of the world at that time; and especially the state of the church and the tone of Christian benevolence; and compare these things with subsequent events, both in America and the old world, we cannot fail to discover that our severence from the political power of our mother country, was not a mere fortuitous circumstance, cast up in the ebullition of revolutionary conflict, but an important instrument in the hands of the Almighty Ruler, designed ultimately to change the entire moral and religious aspect of the whole world. That it has already effected great and important

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changes, both in the political and religious world, is most obvious to all who impartially study the history of Providence. It is a nucleus around which have gathered many new and generous feelings of liberty, and many new and wonderful displays of God's gracious regard to mankind.

The morning of our country's freedom opened a new era in the history of God's moral government, and formed a new period in the progress of those evangelical principles, which are designed ultimately to enlighten all nations, and extend the Redeemer's kingdom from the rivers to the ends of the earth. In the early part of the sixteenth century, shortly after the discovery of this continent by Columbus, Luther arose and first kindled the flame of the reformation in Germany. Aided by the recent invention of the art of printing, and fired by an unquenchable zeal for civil and religious freedom, he severed the chains of popish tyranny, and awakened mankind from the deep spell of slavish ignorance, and servile submission to monkish bigotry, which had gained the strength of centuries, and defied the power of kings. The spell once broken, Europe arose to arms, and made the pope tremble upon his throne of usurpation. In spite of the thunder of his anathemas, or the power of his regal minions; in the midst of the most horrid persecutions, the blessed cause advanced, light increased, the word of God grew and multiplied, and thousands were made to rejoice in the free gospel of the Son of God. Men were thus made to see how they were to govern themselves, and how religion should govern them. Protestantism became the prevailing religion of many European states, and opened a still wider door for the diffusion of correct principles.

Men so recently emerged from the thick mists of papal darkness, could not be expected to discover the whole truth in a moment. Their prejudices were strong, and their attachment to long and established usages was rigid. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that a degree of religious intolerance should find a place in the reformed churches of Europe. Perhaps, indeed, it was best that they should not suddenly come forth from the long and dreary night of papal darkness, to the full meridian blaze of gospel day. So great and sudden a transition would have been too much, even for the stoutest sons of the reformation. Wild and ungovernable enthusiasm would have succeeded, instead of sober and consistent freedom of thought, and liberty of conscience. We are not certain, indeed, but Luther himself would have carried matters too far for the times, had not his bold and impetuous spirit been somewhat curbed by the mildness of Melancthon and other friends of the reformation.

But though the cause of God thus triumphed over the man of sin, and occasioned unspeakable joy among all friends to human freedom

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and human happiness, yet there was something in the very genius of civil government, as it then existed, which presented a barrier against the diffusion and practice of correct religious principles. The beautiful garments of Zion lost much of their glory under the patchwork of many human inventions. The church panted for a purer atmosphere, and a more healthy clime. She longed for a free dwelling, where she might appear in her own native dignity, adorned in the simple habiliments of the unadulterated gospel. The great Head of the church had already prepared a place for his people; and, by political revolutions and local embarrassments, had turned the attention of the true friends of liberty to the shores of this western world. Under the auspices of the most enlightened and powerful nation of Europe, this wilderness was converted into fruitful fields, and the yell of the wild Indian was succeeded by the songs and hallelujahs of worshipping Christians. Where altars had smoked with butchered victims to savage cruelty, there arose temples to the living God, and thither repaired, with bosoms swelling with devotion, the first planters of our soil, and the first fathers of our American churches.

The sentiment, "America is the land of freedom," brought thousands to its bosom, and speedily increased the fame and importance of the western world. In their early government, and the facilities for the increase and perpetuity of their free institutions, the colonies were left mostly to their own resources. This elicited all their intelligence, and put them upon new schemes to meet their own exigencies, and bound them together by stronger ties than could be known in countries of established habits, and permanent governments. And, so far as could be expected, religion was left untouched by the hand of civil power; especially at the period which immediately preceded the revolution. Men of different religious sentiments were left, for the most part, to worship God in a manner they thought the most consistent with the gospel of Christ. Permitted to make their own laws, to build their own temples, to worship in their own way, and taught to consider all this as their unalienable right, it is easy to conceive why they should awake to the least danger, and repulse the first encroachment upon their liberty.

Blind and infatuated was that power which attempted the enslavement of our fathers. But this attempt was permitted by an infinitely wise God, for reasons which did not then appear, but which have since, in part, discovered themselves, and will be more fully developed as we advance in the history of his providence. Lovers of liberty even unto death, our fathers gained their object at the expense of much blood and many lives; and in fixing the constitutional principles of government, they were fearfully jealous of their

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rights, and transmitted to us the same sentiments which inspired them on the field of battle. God has given us a free government; he has planted us in a favored soil; and in regard to liberty of conscience, and the means of salvation, he has exalted us higher than the nations of the earth. But for what purpose? That we might sit as a queen among other nations, and aggrandize ourselves at the expense of piety and virtue? that we might exult in the mere blessing of civil liberty, and outshine all others in the abundance of our wealth? No, by no means. These are objects of minor consequence in the grand economy of Heaven, and in the view of every Christian patriot.

The world, with all its concerns, is approaching to a final crisis, when human governments will have an end, and the probation of the present life will cease for ever. For this grand result every moment is sounding the note of preparation. From every part of the vast universe of God, the affairs of creation are constantly tending to this ultimate point. The glory of the divine character, and the final triumph and exaltation of the church of Christ, these are the grand centre towards which the changing circumstances of the present life are constantly directed. These are the ultimate end of the present economy of this world, in all the various dispensations of Providence to mankind; and it would not be difficult for us to show, in many striking instances, that mere human policy has been so overruled and directed by the Almighty, as to subserve, in a very high degree, his own glory and the special interests of his church.

The captivity of Joseph in Egypt, though with his brethren it originated in the vilest passions of envy and revenge, was made the instrument of preserving a people who were to be the progenitors of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. In the history of the Roman empire, if viewed in connection with collateral circumstances in the providence of God, we cannot fail to discover the most striking marks of an infinitely wise design. At the time of the incarnation of the Son of God, the Romans had carried the triumph of their arms and the influence of their laws to almost every part of the habitable world. Connect this fact with the general and rapid spread of the gospel by the ministry of the apostles, and we shall clearly perceive why Rome was permitted to become the mistress of the world. By the peculiar policy of her government, the Jews, who had bowed their necks to her yoke, were scattered through every province of her dominions, and carried with them the records of inspiration. Thus a general knowledge of their prophetic writings had awakened through all the East an expectation of the coming of Christ. Convinced of their need of a Saviour by the depravity of their nature, and the misery of their condition, men were at this time anxiously waiting the fulfilment of the Jewish

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Scriptures, which held out the promise of some mighty deliverer. Thus one principal barrier to the success of Christ's mission was removed prior to his appearance, and God evidently adapted the circumstances of the world to the purposes of his grace.

Another remarkable coincidence was, that just before the birth of our Saviour, the horrid din of war, through all the Roman empire, was hushed to silence; universal peace was proclaimed; and the whole world seemed to wait in breathless anxiety for the eventful moment when the incarnation of the Prince of peace should be announced to the shepherds upon the plains of Bethlehem, and the reign of righteousness commence.

The rapid and general spread of these heavenly tidings, and the glorious triumphs of the principles of religious truth, were greatly facilitated by the extension of Roman power. The apostles, as denizens of the Roman state, had free access to all people; and wherever they went, the writings of the Jewish prophets had enlightened their path; and the previous expectation of the people awakened attention, and disposed them to listen to the message; so that in about forty years after the crucifixion of Christ, they had planted the standard of the Christian faith in every province where the Roman name was feared. Thus this gigantic earthly power, which had been multiplying its conquests, and extending its dominions for more than seven hundred years, until the *world* had bowed to its majesty, was only acting as a pioneer for the Prince of peace, and the triumphs of the gospel of Christ. And in further confirmation of this, we need only to notice the fact, that no sooner had this mighty instrument of God's mercy thus subserved the interests of the gospel, and witnessed the permanent establishment of the Christian faith, than its glory departed, and it sunk apace to utter imbecility and degradation, till hordes of northern clans rushed upon its fair provinces, and divided the spoils.

We cannot now pause to notice the many instances that might be selected from past history, to illustrate the truth, that *human affairs are all made to subserve the designs of infinite goodness.* In this light, especially, should we view the remarkable circumstances of our own eventful history. The political revolution of our country, the freedom of our civil and religious institutions, our rapid progress in the arts and sciences, and the astonishing success of the many benevolent operations which distinguish the present age, are events of no common interest; and should call up our attention as to what may be their ultimate issue That they augur something of vast importance, we may safely suppose. God has not put such mighty wheels in motion to answer no purpose. Already, indeed, the plan is developing itself, and light is cast upon the future page of provi-

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dence; and he that does not discover the approach of increasingly important events, and behold the rising splendor of a far brighter day than has ever yet dawned upon our world, must close his eyes against the blaze of evidence, clear as the meridian sun.

The note of liberty, which was first sounded at Lexington, has not yet died in silence; but is still swelling in its thrilling accents, through the gloomy cells of vassalage, and awaking tyrants from their guilty slumbers. It will sound still louder, and wake up nations which as yet have hardly caught the distant echo; until all shall break their chains, and rush to liberty and happiness, and the whole world rejoice in the smiles of freedom.

But this is not all. These are but minor and subordinate circumstances of the grand events which lie before us; the mere threshold of the temple. Beyond, though mostly concealed by the veil of futurity, are rising up the glories of the latter day, casting abroad tho rays of dawning splendor, to announce to the world that the glorious Sun of righteousness himself is soon to rise, with healing in his beams. It would require the pen of inspiration to fill up the details of the divine plan in regard to the future history of our world; but to trace some of its general outlines, and foretell the increasing influence of moral and religious principles, and the ultimate triumph of the gospel of Christ, it is only necessary that we look into the history of the past fifty years, and compare it with the sure word of prophecy—the records of unerring truth.

It has ever been observed that civil freedom and religious emancipation march hand in hand, and mutually assist each other in their several conquests. Such has been the fact, especially since the commencement of the sixteenth century; and more especially for the last fifty years. The spirit of freedom has unnerved the tyrant of religious intolerance; paganism has fallen; the weapons of persecution have been broken; the restraining arm of civil authority has withdrawn its unhallowed influence; and the gospel has gone out free and unshackled, commending itself to all by the genuine simplicity and loveliness of its own character. The note which echoed from the temple of American independence, and called the world to freedom, was answered by a louder voice, which proclaimed salvation to guilty sinners through the merits of the cross of Christ. Still wider and louder have the tidings been proclaimed; and not only through the ranks of civilized men has the sound been welcomed, but the red men of our own forests, the islanders of the Pacific sea, the sable sons of Africa, and the inhabitants of eastern India have responded to the call, and bowed their hearts to the mild influence of the gospel.

As God has multiplied the wonders of his grace, by extending the

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gift of civil liberty, and the blessed influence of the word of life, he has awakened the Christian world to greater energies, and called forth the active benevolence of his people. The great fountain of Christian charity is sending out its living streams to fertilize the world. The Bible, the missionary, the tract, the sabbath school, the colonization, and other benevolent associations, are pouring forth their rich treasures to supply the wants of perishing millions, and lead men to the knowledge of salvation.

But why is the note of alarm sounded against these benevolent institutions, as though they came against our country in the character of an invading foe? Are they hostile in their intentions? Are they hurtful in their tendency? Do they infringe upon our civil rights, or endanger the freedom of our nation? No, indeed; they are the truest friends of every thing dear to us as citizens of a free republic. Destroy them, and you demolish some of the strongest safeguards of our national liberty, and tarnish the brightness of our country's glory. Must we, indeed, cherish patriotism at the expense of piety? Must we dishonor God, that we may love our country? I trow not. "But let religion take its own course," it is said, "and not trammel it with human devices." True: let it take its own course; let it flow in its own proper channel. And what is this, I pray, but that ardent love to all mankind which speaks with a thousand tongues of kindness, and rushes through every opening door, to carry life and comfort to the perishing and needy? Is the gospel a passive principle? Has it no expression? Does it never act? Thus taught not our blessed Lord and his apostles. They went out and preached every where, carrying the word of life to all people; and that, too, at the expense of many privations and sufferings, and in the face of persecution and death. It is true that many raised a clamor against our Saviour, alleging that he would provoke the Romans to come and take away their place and nation; and against the apostles, that they turned the world upside down; but who that believes in the divine mission of Christ and his ministers, would choose to rank himself among the traducers of the gospel? Religion, in all its varied forms, is the truest friend to national liberty. Every true Christian loves his country as a patriot; and he loves the world as a member of one common family; and in the performance of those high obligations which bind him to his Maker and to his fellow creatures, he does more for the best interests of mankind, than thousands of others whose high pretensions to patriotism are found only in a multitude of words.

We invite the strictest scrutiny, and appeal to the history of all nations, where the unadulterated religion of the gospel has attained a decided influence; and we fearlessly ask, when has Christianity exhibited traits of character in opposition to patriotism and philan-

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thropy? When has she risen against the rights of man, or inculcated principles that were hostile to civil liberty? Never, in a single instance. With unvarying fidelity she has every where proclaimed, "Peace on earth, good will to men;" and enforced the obligation upon all, to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." We know, indeed, that many have grossly abused the name, and brought a scandal upon the cross of Christ. Under the cloak of religion, and fixed with a *pretended* zeal for God, nations have rushed to war and bloodshed, and spread misery and desolation in their triumphs. Intoxicated with the same fiendish spirits, persecution, under the stolen banner of the Prince of peace, has bared its arm, and drenched its weapons in the blood of its hated victims. The sacred rights of individuals have been sacrificed; the peace of domestic life has been invaded and destroyed; kings have been dethroned; laws have been subverted; and nations have been ruined and scattered by the ruthless arm of persecution. But this is not the religion of the Bible. It is no more like it than darkness is like light. It is far from it as hell is from heaven.

The gospel condemns, in the strongest terms, all kinds of wickedness and unholy dispositions; and inculcates the principles of piety to God, charity to each other, love to our country, obedience to its laws, reverence to its officers, and the spirit of philanthropy to all mankind. And when these principles are carried out in their proper effects, and religious benevolence acts in its widest sphere, no infringement is ever made upon the civil rights of man, or the strength and stability of human government in the least endangered. On the contrary, they give additional beauty to its structure, and greater force to its penalties.

Did time permit, and were it in accordance with our present design, we might take a separate view of every religious and benevolent operation in our country; and show, by plain and positive proof, that the welfare of the nation is in no wise endangered by any of the principles of religion; but, on the contrary, that perpetuity is secured to our dearest institutions, only by the influence of those grand and foremost principles inculcated in the gospel of Christ. Wo be the day to America, when the great schemes of gospel benevolence shall cease to exert an influence upon the public mind, and check the rebellious passions of our hearts. Then, if ever, may we sound the alarm, and prophesy the ruin of our free institutions. But let God be honored; let his laws be respected; give ample support to the charities of the gospel, and all is safe.

Among all the noble and praiseworthy schemes of American patriots and Christians, for the promotion of our highest national glory, and the eternal interests of men, the *sabbath school* is by no means

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the least. And, indeed, if taken in connection with the influence it has upon the benevolence of other associations, and followed out in all its final results, it is first and foremost of all. Modest and unassuming in its character, claiming only infant minds for its materials, it is in fact the strongest bulwark of national virtue and independence; guarding the remotest limits of freedom, and suppressing the first motions of rebellion.

We say emphatically that the sabbath school is the grand *palladium* of our national freedom—the great moral power, which, in the hands of God, is designed to throw around our beloved country a wall of sure defence against the encroachments of anarchy and destruction. Already the foundation is laid deep, and the superstructure is commenced: and it now requires only the united and vigorous exertions of all who love our American Zion, and the work shall be accomplished.

Some general remarks on the influence of education upon national character, and an examination into the genius of the sabbath school system particularly, will place this subject in a proper light. In all free and popular governments, the cultivation of the mind is considered of paramount importance; for these reasons plainly, that no man can govern others, till he knows how to govern himself: and that we cannot appreciate our liberty, till we understand what are its proper restraints. Where there is a want of intellectual culture, there, without exception, is moral debasement. Legislators will want wisdom; laws will want equity; and freedom will want security. Restless demagogues will rise up to disturb the peace of community; and because magistrates have no dignity, and laws have no force, order and subordination will give place to anarchy and rebellion; the bonds of society will be broken, and moral ruin spread itself through all its ranks.

The safety and happiness of all governments are founded in correct moral principles. These principles must be woven into the constitution; they must be the life blood of every law, and direct the energies of justice in all the operations of civil authority. To keep alive these principles, and, consequently, perpetuate the safety and happiness of civil government, they must be carefully transmitted, whole and entire, from generation to generation; they must be written upon the heart of every child; they must be engraven upon every monument of liberty, and published in every lesson of instruction. Our children—these are our hopes; and these are the hopes of the nation, and of the church. The fathers and pillars of our republic are fast sinking to the grave; and we who follow them will soon have acted our part upon the theatre of life, and gone with them to the retributions of eternity. Our children will

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soon take our places, and bear the responsibilities which now rest upon us; and it is for us to say whether or not they shall sustain them, and prove themselves worthy of the honor. Constant and familiar precepts and examples in the domestic circle; facilities for popular education in all ranks of society; and a frequent interchange of correct feelings and sentiments—these alone will give that consistency of moral character to the rising generation, necessary to the happiness of domestic life, and the well-being of civil government. We cannot commence too early, or pursue with too much ardor, the formation of a correct moral character in the education of our children. But remember well, it is not the mere love of books that will do it; as this would give them pedantry, but not wisdom. It is the moral culture of the heart at which we should principally aim. It is to give their minds a virtuous bias, and direct all the feelings of their nature unto such a channel, as shall ever characterize their habits of life by moral integrity.

The sabbath school, beyond all controversy, is the fittest instrument at our hands; the most powerful and efficient, and, at the same time, the safest auxiliary that we can call to our aid. The system was altogether providential in its rise; it originated with an individual whose benevolence prompted him to collect a few vagrant boys, who were wandering in the streets upon the sabbath, and give them instruction; both that they might be reclaimed from idle and vicious habits, and obtain a knowledge of the first principles of science and religion. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" From this small and obscure beginning have arisen the ten thousands of sabbath schools that now bless the Christian world. Millions yet unborn will reverence the name of *Robert Raikes*.

The genius of the sabbath school system is most happily adapted to the culture of the infant mind. It takes the child as he is, and comes down to the lowest capacity of his feeble intellect; and in an easy and familiar manner, communicates that instruction which is to form his character in after life, and accompany him to his endless existence beyond the grave.

Let us look at some of the specific objects and advantages of sabbath school instruction.

It establishes correct habits of conduct. Children are imitative beings; and we need not be told how early and how easily they copy the examples of others. They form habits almost upon mechanical principles; and that, too, long before they know the reason, or consider the consequences. But habits, formed and established, are not easily changed. Principles imbibed in childhood will give a coloring to the whole succeeding life, and have an influence upon the retributions of the eternal world. If it be true in the moral as in

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the natural world, that "just as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined," how necessary to give a proper inclination, both to the thoughts and habits of childhood. If the mind be formed, and habits of conduct established, according as circumstances may happen to direct, to say the least, there is an extreme probability that the character of our children will be fashioned after a bad model. For so many and powerful are the evil propensities of the human heart, that, unless there be a strong counteracting influence which shall overbalance our depravity, they will open the door for the introduction of immoral principles, and the formation of vicious habits.

In the sabbath school are formed *habits of industry*. Children learn to act with a definite object in view, and to value and improve their time; and thus, what otherwise might be difficult, if not morally impossible, is, by early instruction, rendered easy and pleasing. Who that sees idle and vagrant boys wandering upon the sabbath, and listens to their foolish mirth, but must tremble for the consequences in their character and conduct of future life! Who that marks the sabbath lounger at the tavern, or weeps over the infamy of the drunkard, or shudders at the profanity of the blasphemer, or laments the moral degradation of the inmates of our prisons, but is ready to trace back these evils to the want of early culture and correct habits! Correct habits in the boy, are the germ of virtuous manhood.

The exercises of the class-room on the sabbath, become associated with every day of the week; and the habits of industry and the love of employment are thus interwoven through all the associations of life. These habits are such as can always be remembered with pleasure, and cannot fail to have a salutary influence upon the conduct of ripened age: thus guarding children from a thousand snares to which they would be exposed, were they not brought under the eye of sabbath school instruction. Thus, did no other good result from this institution, than the mere formation of correct moral habits in early life, it must be considered of immense importance to the welfare of community, and the continued prosperity of our country at large.

The sabbath school *inculcates correct moral principles*. Its great object is to bend the infant mind to the influence of truth, and bring it under the moulding hand of virtue. And so long as the distinguishing features of the sabbath school system are preserved, so long this will be the natural effect; forasmuch as the principles inculcated are all drawn from the volume of divine inspiration, and whatever is said or done, is under the immediate eye of the authority of the Bible. The teacher feels his responsibility; and influenced by feelings of the kindest nature, and under the constant direction of religious sentiments, it would be morally impossible for him to

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give any other instruction than that which accords with truth and virtue. Children, naturally inclined by the very depravity of their hearts to imbibe error, and grow up under the influence of skepticism and infidelity, are thus early made familiar with the leading truths of morality and religion; and it would be strange indeed, if, with all these advantages, the sanctions of correct moral principles did not, to a very great extent, control the feelings and affections of their hearts. And when, by reason of their age and the calls of duty to a higher sphere of life, they leave the seats of early instruction, and go out into the wide world, they carry with them their first and most durable impressions; and in all their exposure to temptation and the influence of vicious examples, the lessons of the sabbath school will constantly paint before them the heinous nature of sin, and warn them of their danger. Their ready knowledge in the Scriptures forms a depository of truth in their hearts, from which they can ever furnish themselves with weapons to meet the assaults of error, and turn aside the fiery darts of temptation.

The leading principles of the heart will ever give direction to the conduct of the life. In spite of the penal sanctions of law and the moral force of examples, or of all that can be done to control the actions of men, either by the terrors of punishment or the hopes of reward, the predominant passions of the mind and established habits of thought will always bear sway and break down opposing obstacles. Hence it is that men are never thoroughly and permanently reformed in their *conduct*, without a corresponding change of *moral principle*. A reformation of manners, which proceeds only from fear, is never to be trusted; for while the fountain is corrupt, no lasting purity can be given to the stream. The influence of moral principle will go further to make men honest and virtuous, than all the array of punishment exhibited in the prison or upon the gallows.

Correct moral principles, then, are what we want; they are what we must have, or we have nothing which can prove of lasting benefit. And to give these principles a firm hold on moral character, they must be deeply planted in the heart at an early period of life; at a time when the mind is more disposed to receive a virtuous bias, than after established habits have rendered it insensible and unyielding. But how can this be done? what means are most likely to produce this effect? by what agency can we hope to fashion the minds of our children according to this model? These are questions of great importance, and well deserve the serious attention of all parents, patriots and Christians. To promote this great cause of universal benevolence, God has placed many means within our reach. We must use them all: we must bring into requisition every assistance that will advance our purpose. But while we neglect no means which may in the least advance the interests of the

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rising generation, we are more especially to use those on which God has bestowed much honor; and which, from their nature, are best calculated to cultivate the young mind, and produce a correct habit of thinking, and strengthen the influence of correct moral principles.

The sabbath school inculcates principles that are absolutely necessary to form a correct moral character; and we are free and bold to say that we know of no plan of instruction that is equal to it; none that so generally and effectually gives a virtuous bias to the minds of children. The *time*, the *method*, all the *circumstances* connected with a sabbath school, are well calculated to exert a salutary influence upon their young and tender hearts. It is on the *sacred sabbath* that they are instructed:—it is from the *Holy Bible* that they draw their lessons:—it is under the eye of *correct example* that they are trained.

The sabbath school is the nursery of social virtues. Is it desirable for the peace of domestic life, that the feelings and interests of children should be identified? that they should cultivate those principles of kindness and friendship, so essential to the happiness of community—to the very existence even of a well-ordered state of society? Is it desirable that these heaven-born principles should be diffused through all ranks, and exert an influence in all the associations of life? If so—and surely no one will question it—then does the sabbath school commend itself to every one, by strong and urgent considerations. Every thing which tends to cherish and strengthen the virtues of social life, and make men feel and act like brethren, should be encouraged and sent forth into the world to act in its widest sphere of influence. Then would contentions cease, and harmony bear rule. Then would wars and bloodshed disgrace the earth no more, and peace, with her olive branch, would be the inmate of every dwelling, and scatter her rich blessings through all ranks of human society.

The cultivation of these principles is one great object of sabbath school instruction; and it requires only our attentive observation to be convinced, that it has succeeded in this to the utmost hopes of its warmest friends. The genius of the institution is perfectly adapted to this purpose, and it cannot possibly fail where it is properly conducted. Here children are taught to read and love that book, which, of all others, most strongly urges the duties of social life, and which paints the character of social virtues in the liveliest colors. The simple but striking fact of their coming together under the quiet stillness of a sabbath morn, would seem to forbid the indulgence of noisy and unruly passions. By the very tranquillity of the scene, their feelings are hushed to peaceful silence, and they enter upon the sacred duties of the class-room with their minds most happily

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prepared for religious instruction. Their being associated together in the same place; identified in the same school; instructed in the same duties; directed and encouraged by the same voice of kindness, are all calculated to harmonize their feelings, and awaken those sentiments of endearment and friendship, so lovely in children, so desirable in ripened age.

The principles instilled into the minds of children in the sabbath school, will speak in their daily conduct. Their influence will be felt in the domestic circle, and even parents, and those whose path never leads them to the house of God, will acknowledge the force of virtuous examples. They will quell the tumult of domestic feuds, by an authority which, though mild and gentle, cannot be resisted; and through community in general these principles will have an influence, and men will feel the effect, though they perceive not the agent which produces it. The cultivation of the social virtues in childhood, will lead to the exercise of all those generous and noble feelings in manhood, which have characterized the greatest and best of men in all ages of the world. If, from a principle of courteousness and general benevolence, we love our companions in early life, from the same principle, matured by age, we shall embrace, in our brotherly affection, the whole world of mankind. Did all possess these feelings; were these principles diffused through every branch of the human family, among parents and children, among the wealthy and the poor, half the bitterness of life would be destroyed, and our wicked world would be a comparative paradise.

That this is not a picture of mere fancy, that the sabbath school system is directly calculated to produce this great moral change, we appeal to facts, a thousand and a thousand facts, which every where in Christendom proclaim this blessed truth. Why are our ears so often pained with the noisy tumults of quarrelsome children? Because the sabbath school has never extended its salutary influence over their turbulent passions. They act out nature, unrestrained. Why are so many families constantly embroiled in domestic strifes, and parents and children embitter each other's existence by their want of amity and condescension? Be assured, the light of the sabbath school dawns not upon their dwellings. The Bible is unheeded by the parents, and the precepts of early piety are unheard by their offspring. Our juvenile penitentiaries are filled with those whose sabbath hours have been spent in idleness and vice. Mark the inmates of our sterner prisons, and, among them all, scarcely one can be found whose name was ever enrolled upon the records of a sabbath school. But turn we our attention to the more inviting walks of life. Behold that interesting group of children, whose countenances beam with all the mildness of fraternal kindness and

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innocent joy. No unkind looks or reproachful language interrupts their harmony. And their parents, too,—oh what a lovely sight to them! It adds more to the sum of domestic felicity than thousands of silver and gold. Make a selection of those families of whom this description is true; and, among them all, can we find one whose children had not early and assiduously been taught the principles of morality and religion? who have not availed themselves of those advantages which the sabbath school affords, or provided the best substitute where these advantages were not within their reach? And now, who are most likely to rise to honored manhood, and bless the world with examples of benevolence and patriotism,—the child of early culture, or one of neglected habits? Let facts speak; and in this case they speak volumes. They all speak in favor of the cause whose interest we plead.

But we prize the sabbath school more especially as *a means of direct religious instruction*. Many parents wholly and shamefully neglect their duty to their children in religious matters. In other things they are careful to instruct them. They teach them to know the world, to acquire wealth, and to make the most of earthly and sensual pleasures. But no concern is manifested for their eternal welfare; nothing is seen in the domestic circle of a religious character; nothing is said of the duty of children to their heavenly Father; they may read their Bible or not, as they choose; and parents seem to think it of very little consequence whether their children are Christians or heathen. Others, again, do not possess the requisite ability to give proper religious instruction. Having themselves been neglected in early life, or wanting the wisdom and energy necessary to such an undertaking, their families are neglected, and grow up in ignorance and irreligion. These painful considerations speak loudly in favor of some general system, which may embrace all, of every rank, as the objects of its fostering care. *This system is the sabbath school.* It opens its doors to every one without distinction; and, in an easy and familiar manner, points out the way of eternal life to thousands, who otherwise would grope in moral darkness, and go the downward road to death.

But if these complaints were entirely unfounded; if all parents fulfilled their solemn obligations to their children, this would not, after all, shut out the importance of the sabbath school. Here are additional facilities of instruction; here are circumstances which cannot well exist in individual family circles. Children are fond of society; and are often prompted to act as one among many, when, as solitary individuals, they could not be induced to do any thing. The air of contentment and pleasure which pervades a sabbath school; the kindness and condescension of the teachers; the innocent emulation and ambition awakened in the minds of children,

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all are calculated to interest their minds and make their duties a pleasure. Here they learn the most important truths in the universe; and are made conversant with those high and interesting motives which ought to influence them as the creatures of God, and candidates for a life of endless happiness.

The sabbath school is emphatically the nursery of the church. Here the earliest seed is sown, from which may be expected the maturest fruit. There are thousands who now shine in the church militant as brilliant lights, and thousands who now sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in a glorified state, whose first thoughts of God and of heaven were awakened in the sabbath school room, and who, but for the blessed opportunity, might still have groped in the darkness of sin and death. Christians, whose character has been moulded by such an influence, are more likely than others to become active patrons of those benevolent institutions which are designed ultimately to evangelize the world.

Who are to be our successors in the sanctuary of God, and take our place in the ranks of the militant faith, when we shall have gone to our final accounts, and our lips shall cease to give instruction? Who shall then build up the waste places of Zion, and extend her borders, and preserve the purity of our holy religion? Those, certainly, whom we have taught to reverence the sabbath, to love the Bible, to love prayer, to love each other, to love Christians and imitate their examples of piety and virtue. These are the hopes of our beloved Zion, the tender plants, which are yet to bloom in the garden of God, and magnify the riches of heavenly grace. These are to be the salt of the earth; who, while they shine as Christians in the church, will add to the highest dignity and honor of their country. It is, indeed, an interesting and important thought, that the pious examples of every sincere Christian, while they more directly advance the special interests of religion, will extend a salutary influence over the affairs of civil community, and go far towards imparting new strength and energy to the free institutions of human government. Religion will not, indeed she cannot, shrink from the responsibility which attaches her to the civil rights of man. It is for her to give a finishing beauty and stability to the temple of freedom, and guard those sacred rights of liberty and happiness, which are the lawful inheritance of every man, who claims them in due submission to the supreme authority of God. There is no fear that she will lay a rude hand upon their rights, and endanger their safety. She too sensibly feels the responsibility, and acts too much in view of the glory of the Divine Being, and the best interests of mankind, to be guilty of such wickedness. Our highest officers of civil government never act with greater wisdom, nor govern with greater equity and efficiency, than when they take the Bible for their text-

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book, and are influenced by the highest sanctions of religious obligation. It is the influence of mere human policy and personal ambition, that originates all the higher acts of maladministration, and brings disgrace upon rulers, and ruin upon nations. Carry the authority of the Bible, and the mild and persuasive force of religion into our halls of legislation, and our courts of justice and equity, and our nation will stand high in the magnanimity of its own superior excellence, and firm and safe under the protection of God and truth.

Let the influence of a religious education be felt every where among us; let all the children of our country enjoy the advantages of sabbath school instruction, and we secure the whole moral force of the nation on the side of patriotism and virtue; we make the religion of the Bible the paramount law of the land; and that, too, without constraint, receiving a willing and joyful obedience.

It comes, then, to this; that the church, the nation, and the world, are all looking to the sabbath school for an influence which shall change the general tide of human manners, establish correct habits of conduct, give force to correct moral principles, and hasten that universal reign of righteousness, which shall fill the earth with the glory of the Lord, and consummate the gracious promises of eternal truth.

NOW UNTO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY WISE GOD, BE HONOR AND GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

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SERMON XXVIII.

BY REV. DANIEL DE VINNE,

WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

COLOSSIANS I. 18.

HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH.

IN every age of the world God has had his people. After the flood, when the knowledge of his nature and worship was nearly lost, he selected the posterity of Abraham from among every other nation for the purpose of imparting to them the revelation of his will, and constituting them his church. This covenant made with them, with all its immunities and privileges, was afterwards enlarged and extended under Moses, and finally received its completion and perfection in the Christian dispensation.

Into this new covenant all nations are now invited to come, having the assurances from Christ, its Mediator and original Projector, that on condition of their acceptance, he will not only receive and dwell with them, but will also keep, defend, and ultimately bring them to the church triumphant and general assembly of the first born in heaven. Having, therefore, these great and precious promises, it is highly important that we examine ourselves, whether we have complied with this condition, and have become already the true members of Christ's church; whether we have a scriptural warrant to believe that we are entitled to all these blessings and immunities; for if we err in this, we may err to the loss of our souls. This inquiry will lead us to consider the nature and constitution of the Christian church into which we are invited to come. And let us,

1. EXAMINE THE TERM BY WHICH THIS BODY IS CALLED.

The word church, in its modern acceptation, is extremely ambiguous. It is sometimes taken for the building set apart for public worship; sometimes for the people worshipping in it; according to others, it

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designates that denomination of Christians who adhere to a particular ritual and order of ministers; but more generally, for the whole collective body of believers throughout the world. But it is the scriptural, and not the common and corrupted, application of the word which at present we examine. The original word Εκκλησια, in the text, means simply an assembly, or congregation of any kind, the nature of which can only be learned from concurring circumstances. The word rendered church, is even used, Acts xix. 32, for the mob or confused rabble collected for the purpose of persecuting St. Paul, which the town clerk distinguishes from a lawful assembly. In its application to Christianity, it signifies the assembly, congregation or society of Christians, which, by the preaching of the gospel, has been called out of the spirit and maxims of the world, to live according to the precepts and institutions of Christ. It designates all those true believers, of whatever place or society, who are vitally united to Christ by living faith, and who, deriving from him spiritual life, walk no longer after the flesh, but are led by the Spirit of God into all truth. The Christian church is, therefore, a visible body, which has not only spiritual union with its Head, but also visible fellowship among its own members for the purpose of observing the ordinances of Christ, and confessing him before men.

From the evidence which the New Testament affords, the word church is not applied to the building, but uniformly to the people.

1. *To a particular and single congregation of believers*, as the church which was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. xvi. 3 6, and 1 Cor. xvi. 19, and that which was in the house of Nymphas Col. iv. 15, and Philemon i. 2. This meaning of the word must appear evident from the fact that the early Christians, either on account of poverty or persecution, had no public buildings for worship. but always held their meetings in private houses. The word, in the above sense, is frequently used in the plural number, denoting several of these congregations; "Paul, to the churches of Galatia;" chap. i. 2, that is, to all the Christian congregations dispersed throughout that country; so the "churches were established in the faith and increased in numbers daily." But whenever these assemblies are spoken of collectively, the term denotes,

2. *The catholic or universal church, composed of true believers, of whatever society or country throughout the world;* Matt. xvi. 18. Acts xx. 28. In this sense the Christian fathers frequently use the word; Ireneus speaks of "the church dispersed through the world to the ends of the earth;" St. Cyprian says, "Where two or three believers are met together, there is a church;" and so also Tertullian, "Wheresoever three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, there is a church." Therefore, in the proper use of this word, there can be no such thing as *the church;* applying the term to one partic-

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ular denomination, there may be a church, and the churches signifying one or more; different religious assemblies, but no individual branch of the general church, can be exclusively entitled to this name; hence the church of Rome, and some Episcopalians in our own country, by arrogating this title wholly to themselves, abuse the term, and change it from its meaning in scriptural and apostolic times. Having thus determined the signification of the word by which this body is called, we shall now show who are,

II. THE MEMBERS OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

And this is a subject of the utmost importance to every individual. The very inquiry, to ascertain what constitutes not a nominal, but a real member of Christ's spiritual church, demands our serious and prayerful attention, for if we err in this, we may err fatally. The Jews depended much upon their covenant relation to God, supposing their salvation sure, merely because they were the lineal descendants of Abraham, while at the same time our Lord declared them to be as "rottenness," and "of their father the devil." And it is still to be feared, that there are those, even in this age of evangelical light, who, because they are zealous for the church, punctual to observe its outward forms and duties, and because they have been baptized in the name of Christ, and have a place in his visible communion, think all is safe, while, at the same time, they have not the "Spirit of Christ, neither a part nor lot in his spiritual kingdom. As the Scriptures are the only rule of faith, to them we must look for an answer to the question, Who are the real members of the Christian church?

And this the apostle shows largely, and in the clearest manner, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, iv. 1—6, in which he instructs all the members of the church "to walk worthy of their vocation, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called unto one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." In this description the apostle designates not only the believers at Ephesus, but all Christians, in every part of the world, so that the above character and experience are necessary to constitute a real member of the Christian church in every place and age of the world; and if we have not these, whatever our profession may be, we are, in reality, "none of his." The common division of religion, into the belief of doctrines and practice of duties, is incorrect; experience, which forms the most prominent part in the Christian system, has been often wholly omitted, or thrown into the shade. It is remarkable that our Lord, when instructing Nicodemus in the nature of religion, says nothing of the two former, but dwells altogether upon experience—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Every at

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tentive reader must also see the manner in which Christian morality is taught in the New Testament, not so much by insisting upon the observance of a few or many specific duties, as by requiring a renovation of the whole heart, from which all practice springs; in every case, experience is to precede practice; for how can the fruit be good, unless the tree be good; but if the tree be good, the fruit must be necessarily so. The above portion of Scripture contains five particulars in which all Christians agree.

1. *They are all actuated by one spirit.* This is not the spirit of the world, nor pride, nor yet that with which they were born; but a new spirit, which was infused into their hearts on their union with Christ, when, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were made new creatures, when the enmity was slain, the carnal, stony heart removed, and they received the mind that was in Christ. After this union, the spirit of humility, gentleness and love, universal love to God and man, manifested itself in their words and actions. Having been thus born into the kingdom of the Son of God, and constituted living members of his church, their understandings perceive new truths, concerning the character of God and the heinous nature of sin; their will receives a new bias, choosing and delighting itself in God; their affections embrace new objects, the things which are above at God's right hand; their hearts are impressed with new feelings, love to God and all his people, and, in a word, so great is the change, that the whole soul is cast into a new mould, and is emphatically called in Scripture a new creation.

2. *They are all influenced by one faith.* This, however, is not a mere subscription to creeds and articles, about which so much blood and treasure have been wasted; nor is it only an intellectual assent to truth, although it should embrace all the truths in the Bible, for even this faith devils and wicked men may have. But it is that faith which combines assent with reliance, belief with trust; that "sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he loves me, and gave himself for me." It implies a hearty concurrence of "the will and affections, with the plan of salvation, which supposes a renunciation of every other refuge, and an actual trust in the Saviour, and personal apprehension of his merits; such a belief of the gospel, by the power of the Spirit of God as leads us to come to Christ, to receive Christ, to trust in Christ, and to commit the keeping of our souls into his hands, in humble confidence of his ability and willingness to save us." In the possession of such a faith, the eye of the soul is so opened that it perceives a substantial reality in every truth of the Bible; it apprehends the import of all the threatenings and promises, and discovers throughout the whole economy of grace, the infinite love of God to sinners.

3. *They are all initiated by one spiritual baptism into Christ,*

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and made living members of his body, of which water baptism is only "the outward visible sign." The baptism of water admits us into the visible communion of the Christian church; but it is the baptism of the Holy Ghost which alone can communicate grace to the soul, and "make us the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom." The former ought to be used to obtain the latter, but can never be a substitute for it; there is as much difference between these baptisms as between a man and his portrait, or between a loaf painted on canvass and real bread which sustains life. Simon, commonly called Magus, Acts viii. 21, was baptized with the other disciples, but this outward ordinance did not bring him into union with Christ, for St. Peter declared that he had "neither part nor lot in the matter, for his heart was not right in the sight of God." How fallacious and unscriptural, then, to suppose that the baptism of water regenerates our nature, or brings us into spiritual union with Christ, when the apostle saith it is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh," but is "the answer of a good conscience towards God," and, in obedience to the divine requirement, should be used as a means to obtain its antitype, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

4. *They are all supported by the same hope:* A hope full of immortality. "Being begotten again," "born from above," they have "a lively hope," not the dead hope of the hypocrite, or the presumptuous one of the nominal Christian, both of which must alike perish; but a well-grounded hope, resting on the internal evidence of consciousness that the promises of God are fulfilled in their experience; that the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, and that they are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ. They do not hope that they are in the favor of God—this may be with them a matter of knowledge; with the primitive Christians, they may "know that they have passed from death unto life," for "whosoever is born of God hath the witness in himself;" but it is a hope founded on the above evidences, that through the grace of God, they who are now the Lord's shall be able to pass the waves of this world, and enjoy eternal felicity in heaven.

And, finally, they are all united in one body, and governed by one Lord, who has set up his kingdom in their hearts, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father." The kingdom of God, which is, "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, is within them:" The Prince of peace reigns in their mortal body, bringing every imagination into subjection to himself. For we ought always to remember, that Christ saves none in heaven, whom he does not, at least some time previous to their departure, govern on the earth. If we would have him for our Saviour, we must also have him for our king; if we would wish to be saved by him from death and destruction in the future world, we must be led by him in the ways of righteousness in this. By this

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rule we may determine who will be his; for as the stones of the temple were all fitted before they came to Jerusalem, so every member of Christ's body must be brought under the renovating influence of his grace, and be fully conformed to his image in this world, before he can take his place in heaven. In these particulars, then, consist that oneness or unity, common to all genuine Christians, a unity of affection, experience and disposition, which, if any man have not, he is none of Christ's.

The religion of the Lord Jesus is, at this day, what it was in the time of his apostles and martyrs; it is the same in one order of Christians that it is in another; Christ does not change, nor does his grace ever produce opposite results; it is uniformly one thing all over the world, in every age and denomination; this uniformity, however, does not consist in any thing external, but in something infinitely better, the communication of the Spirit of Christ. Being wholly ignorant of the nature of this unity, and placing it altogether in external ordinances, the church of Rome has wasted millions in attempting to bring all nations under one visible head, and make them worship in one language and according to one ritual. It is said that Charles the V., emperor of Germany, in advanced life, ordered twelve clocks to be made, which should strike the hours as if they were one; after long and faithful trial, the artist acknowledged that this exact uniformity of time and sound among so many was beyond his power; upon which the emperor observed with surprise and regret, that if clocks could not be made to strike alike, men could not be made to think alike. What a pity this imperial persecutor had not discovered this fact before he had been the means of putting one hundred thousand to death for religion! The same mistaken notion among our forefathers, produced in England the famous act of uniformity, by which two thousand ministers, the cream of the church, were expelled from her communion, and many thousand families driven to exile and foreign countries. If uniformity in religion had always been sought for according to the above scriptural criteria, the Christian church had never been divided into so many sects and parties.

Every body being composed of parts or members, to secure order among them in their operation, each one must have its respective office: this will lead us to inquire concerning,

III. THE OFFICERS OR MINISTERS WHO SERVE IT.

The apostle gives us a full enumeration of the offices in the Christian church, Ephesians iv. 11, "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." It is not at all probable these were so many distinct offices held by different individuals, but rather so

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many names given to various gifts, several of which might have been possessed by the same person. Some of these gifts or offices were temporary or extraordinary, and passed away with the miraculous endowments of the first ages of Christianity, as that of prophets, which, from its very nature, could not have been permanent. An apostle was one who had seen the Saviour, witnessed his resurrection, and had been immediately commissioned by him to preach the gospel; consequently the office itself must have ceased with the twelve, for none after them could be thus privileged and commissioned by Christ. When Herod killed James, no successor was appointed in the apostleship, as in the case of Matthias who succeeded Judas; nor is there any evidence that this number, order or office was ever afterwards continued in the church. The evangelists appear to have been assistants to the apostles, and to have acted wholly under their special direction in planting and governing the churches. Timothy and Titus were of this number, whom the apostle commissioned to ordain elders in several churches, but gave them no direction nor authority to ordain to themselves successors in their own particular office as evangelists, from which it seems evident that this office, too, passed away with the other extraordinary ones which had been instituted for the purpose of planting the churches.

In ascertaining the permanent offices in the primitive church, much light will be thrown on the inquiry, by recollecting that its constitution was modeled, not as some have imagined, after the manner of the temple service, typical and passing away, but very much after that of the synagogue, which had its "rulers, elders, or presbyters, and ministers or servants," Luke iv. 26; of whom the first two read the Scriptures, expounded them, offered up the prayers of the people and governed the congregation; and the latter, who performed the office of deputies to the elders, and took care of the sacred books. In this instance there is a striking correspondence between the service in the synagogue, and the public worship of a primitive Christian congregation, not only in the number and arrangement of its offices, but also in the peculiar duties of each. This parallel might be carried much further: ordination in the Christian church was also derived from the same source; the priests of the temple were never ordained, but succeeded to their office by birth; but the elders or presbyters in the synagogue were always ordained by the imposition of hands and prayer. Now nothing is more reasonable than to suppose that the first disciples, who were mostly Jews, in instituting a separate service, would adopt the plan of the synagogue to which they were accustomed, and which was capable, in so many instances, of being applied to the new dispensation of things. From which it appears that

1. *The lowest sacred and permanent office in the Christian church was that of deacons:* These were the servants or ministers, to whom,

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during the community of goods, the distribution of the alms of the poor were committed. The office itself, as already intimated, was derived from the synagogue, every one of which had at least three of these servants, the first of whom acted as deputy to the ruler. But were they ministers of the word in the primitive church, or mere laymen attending to the temporalities of the congregation? That they were the former is evident:

1. They were set apart to their office by prayer and the *imposition of the hands* of the apostles, Acts vii. 26.

2. Stephen, one of the seven deacons, being full of faith and the Holy Ghost, did not only great signs and wonders among the people, but also *preached the gospel*, for which he suffered martyrdom. Philip, another deacon, preached Christ in Samaria, Acts viii. 3—5.

3. These primitive deacons also *administered baptism*, Acts viii. 13. Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and baptized both men and women.

That they were a different order, and inferior in rank to elders, is also evident. 1. From the name which signifies a servant; one who acts *under the direction of another*. 2. From the separate and *distinctive description of the office* in St. Paul's instruction to Timothy about ordination, 1 Epis. iii. 1—13. 3. That having "used the office of a deacon well, they *purchase to themselves a good degree*," that is, most probably, the office of an elder. These facts prove that deacons were inferior to elders, and yet they were not laymen, for they received ordination, preached and administered baptism.

2. *Another office in the primitive church was that of elder, presbyter or bishop.* This order of ministers, like that of deacons, appears to have been taken from the Jewish service; for every synagogue had its council of elders, the president of which was called "the ruler of the synagogue," and in some places, as in Acts xiii. 15, we read of these "rulers" in the plural number, a sufficient proof that one was not elevated *in order* above the rest. But whether the office of bishop was a distinct and superior order of ministers to that of elders, holding by divine right the exclusive powers of government and ordination, is a question which has been warmly contested for several centuries, particularly since the reformation. The Scriptures, antiquity, and the nature of things, have been alike summoned to prove and deny this point; but with Protestants the Bible must be the sole arbiter in all such matters, and as far as we are able to understand the declarations of the New Testament, it gives no exclusive power to bishops over elders, but rather considers them of the same order. This will appear, because,

1. *The terms "elder, presbyter and bishop," are applied in the Scriptures to the same individual.* St. Paul, sending for the elders of the church at Ephesus, meets them at Miletus, Acts xx. 28, and

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charges them to "take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," or, as in the original, "bishops." That these were synonymous and convertible terms in the apostle's estimation, is very evident, for the identical persons called "elders" in verse 17, are in the above quotation denominated bishops; and the work assigned them, "to feed the church" and "take heed to the flock," which imply both teaching and government, are also evidences that these elders have not only the name of bishops, but that they performed their work. The same apostle, in his epistle to Titus, i. 5—7, directs him "to ordain elders in every city," and then immediately adds, by way of direction in performing this work, that, "a bishop must be blameless," plainly showing again that these words were synonymous, pointing out in both places the same persons and office. Again, in his instructions to Timothy, 1 Epis. iii. 1—13, in relation to the persons whom he should ordain, St. Paul mentions only "bishops" and "deacons," but says not one word about elders; now if these were a separate order of ministers, distinct from bishops, is it not strange that he gives no direction about ordaining any, nor even alludes to them, although it is well known that this class of ministers composes the great body of the clergy in all churches. Once more, bishops and deacons are the only order of ministers mentioned in St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, i. 1, although he addresses himself "to all the saints" or private believers in that place; now if presbyters or elders are not included among the bishops, the omission can never be accounted for. But if we allow that these bishops were a distinct order of ministers, having each a diocess and a plurality of elders under them, then another, an equally formidable difficulty presents itself, that in the infancy of Christianity, there should be a plurality of bishops in the small cities of Philippi and Ephesus.

It is remarkable that the apostles never call themselves bishops, but more than once elders. The apostle John, in his 2d Epis. 1, speaking of himself, says, "The elder unto the elect lady," and St. Peter, 1 Epistle v. 1, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder," or more literally, Συμπρεσβυτερος, fellow elder, intimating that when unemployed in the extraordinary vocation of an apostle, he was of the same rank and on a level with other elders. This, then, is the scriptural account of the rank and ecclesiastical dignity of St. Peter, said to have been the first bishop of Rome, and from whom, if such there ever was, the famous uninterrupted succession of bishops must have proceeded. But how fatal and ruinous to this pretended succession in the order of diocesan bishops, that he, upon whom this depends, should never call himself a bishop, or chief of the apostles, but simply a fellow elder with those whom he does not pretend to dictate or command, but only "exhorts" to the faith-

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ful "oversight" or discharge of the episcopal office, and not to be "lords over God's heritage."

2. *The highest authority in the government of the church was vested in the eldership.*

Much of the preceding argument which assigns to the elders the name of bishops, will also sustain our second position, that after the apostolic office had ceased, the work of governing the church devolved upon this order of ministers, who are indiscriminately called elders, presbyters or bishops. The elders are "exhorted to feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the *oversight* thereof," or, as the original word is, ἐπισκοποῦντες, that is, discharging the office of bishops among them, and, lest they should abuse this power of governing the church, he adds, "neither being lords over God's heritage." Now these admonitions concerning episcopal duties would have been altogether unnecessary and misapplied, if these elders were an inferior order of ministers under the control of diocesan bishops, who, by divine right, had both the government of themselves and their flocks. When St. Paul, Acts xx. 28, had given his last charge to the church at Ephesus, expecting to see his face no more, he appointed no successor to himself, neither prelate, nor one above another in that city, but, on the contrary, left the whole government with the elders, or these presbyter-bishops whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers, to take heed to the flock and feed the church of God. It has been, however, alleged that Timothy was the successor of the apostle and became diocesan of Ephesus; but this by no means is evident; with as much propriety we might assign to him the episcopal jurisdiction of Philippi and Corinth, Phil. ii. 19, 1 Cor. iv. 17, and xvi. 10. The apostle simply "besought him to abide in Ephesus, while he (St. Paul) went into Macedonia." Now if Timothy had been resident bishop of the former place, such a request would have been altogether out of place, because it amounts to no more than an exhortation to stay at home in his own diocess. The instruction to Timothy, 1 Epistle, about the government of the church at Ephesus, must have been written before the call of the elders, Acts xx. for in the Epis. iii. 14, "He hopes to come unto him shortly," but at the meeting of the elders in the same city he says, "they should see his face no more." Now it must not be forgotten, that at this last meeting, and in the presence of their supposed bishop, St. Paul instructs the elders about the government of the church, but says not one word about Timothy or any other diocesan; a fair presumption that after Timothy had discharged the special duty assigned him, of regulating this church, he had no further authority over them. "The elders who rule well," are also counted worthy of double honor; and when the controversy arose about circumcision, it was not decided exclusively by the apostles, but in conjunction with the elders, a sufficient evi-

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dence that the latter were associated at this early period in the government of the church, with even those who had been immediately commissioned by Christ, and that after the extraordinary office of the apostles ceased, the whole government fell into their hands.

3. *The power of ordination was also with the body of elders.* This part of the argument is capable of proof by *inference* and direct *scriptural testimony*. 1. As the elders were not only "to rule," but also to take "the oversight and *feed* the church of God," provide for its present and future wants, it was consequently necessary that they should have power to ordain to themselves successors in the ministry to perpetuate the office and supply the increasing demand of the rising church. 2. All the examples of ordination which the New Testament affords are confined to apostles, evangelists, presbyters, prophets, and teachers; but never to bishops, as distinguished from any of these.

The apostle Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 14, says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." And in 2 Tim. i. 6, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands." Whether these passages refer to one or two consecrations is not important; the point in question is sufficiently established, that Timothy was set apart to the ministry by the ordination of presbyters, and that through the powers conferred by their hands, he was to "ordain elders in every city." Another instance, to which we would refer in support of our proposition, is in Acts xiii. 1—4; and although in some respects this might have been an especial case, and a consecration to a particular work, yet at least it shows that the Holy Ghost employed, for this purpose, men who were neither apostles nor bishops, and through the imposition of their hands these men were authorized to go to the heathen and constitute churches. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them: And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Those who consecrated these men to found churches among the heathen, are called "prophets and teachers;" what their peculiar office was in the primitive church is not easy to determine, but they are not denominated bishops, nor are any of the apostles in the list; the probability is, they were presbyters, and from the whole we may safely conclude, that neither of the two former had the exclusive power of ordination, but that this right was held in common with the elders. But the ordination of Timothy by presbyters, is decisive, and proves this point fully. One such declaration from the pen of inspiration is infinitely of more authority than all the arguments

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and theories of men, and must for ever silence all that sophistry can attempt against it.

Thus far the Holy Scriptures, our only guide, have led us, and if there were an order of ministers in the primitive church after the decease of the apostles and evangelists, who possessed a power distinct from that of elders, and superior to it, both in government and ordination, such an order cannot be determined by the word of God.

4. *Neither do the apostolic fathers prove bishops to have been an order superior to elders.* Their testimony, however, in this case, can be only presumptive, but not decisive; their writings may assist us to understand the early institutions of Christianity, but can never give sufficient warrant to establish in the church that which had not been previously revealed. 1. Because they are not inspired; and 2. As the learned Mosheim and others affirm, their authenticity labors under much obscurity, and is embarrassed with many difficulties. But allowing even the genuineness of their epistles, they are far from proving diocesan episcopacy, for, although Ignatius, the principal author in this controversy, frequently mentions deacons, elders and bishops in the same church, a circumstance, however, which the Scriptures never do, yet the duty and jurisdiction which he assigns to the latter, are such as can never apply to a diocesan bishop.

1. *Their sphere of labor during the first three centuries was never called a diocess, but παροικος, a parish,* as the "parish of Alexandria," Euseb. lib. ii. c. 24, "of Ephesus, Corinth, Athens;" and these parishes, or ancient bishoprics, were never said to contain churches (in the plural), but simply a church (in the singular), every one of which had its own bishop. The word diocess, which means province, was not given to the bishop's jurisdiction until the fourth century, when the bishoprics of principal cities began to extend themselves over the smaller ones of the villages and country.

2. *The small extent of the primitive dioceses.* That they were small, not larger, probably, than some of our modern parishes, appears evident from Ignatius, who exhorts all people of the bishopric of Ephesus "to assemble in *the same place* with the bishops and presbyters, that they may have one prayer and supplication." To the Philadelphians he says, "There is but one altar (communion table) and one bishop," these were correlative terms, so that where the one was, the other must necessarily be; and Justin Martyr says, "The bishop's *whole flock met on Sunday,* when he gave them the eucharist, and if any were absent, he sent it by the deacons." Clemens Romanus states, "that the apostles ordained their first converts to be bishops and deacons in the *country and cities* where they had preached." Now if all the believers could meet at the same place with their bishop, and receive the sacrament from him; if there were in this early period, when the number of Christians was quite small, bishops in

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the "cities and country," these certainly could not have been diocesan prelates, who had an extensive jurisdiction and a plurality of elders under them.

3. *The duties assigned to them were rather parochial*, than episcopal, in the modern acceptation of that word. Ignatius says, "It is not lawful without the bishop, either to baptize or celebrate the holy communion;" again, in describing the duty of a bishop, he says, "Speak to each member of the church separately, seek out all by name, even the servants of both sexes, and advise every one of the flock in the affairs of marriage." These duties are certainly *parochial*, and if the smallest offices could not be performed without the bishop, then there must have been one in every place, who had the oversight, not of ministers, but of every member and of all things belonging to the congregation.

4. *The great number of primitive bishops.* Every person who has read the history of the church during the first three centuries, must have observed that the number of bishops in that period was very great, far more so than several centuries afterwards, when the number of the Christians had increased tenfold. Cyprian, Epis. v. 2. and Clemens, already quoted, says "that bishops were ordained throughout all provinces and cities;" and of this sort of country or village bishops, were Zoticus, and Julian of Cumanum, and Apamea, mentioned by Eusebius, lib. v. c. 14. At the ordination of Cornelius, bishop of Rome, there were present sixteen bishops, and Fortunatus of Carthage boasted that at his installation there were twenty-five. When Paulus Samosatenus was deposed from the see of Antioch, it was done by a council of seventy bishops; and another council, though not a general one, was held in 360, at Romani, composed of more than *four hundred;* and Gibbon, the historian, says, that about the year 321, the Christian church was governed by one thousand and eight hundred bishops, which is perhaps more than double the number of diocesan bishops at this day throughout the world. Shortly after this period the number of bishops was greatly lessened, insomuch, that at the great council of Trent, there were only about forty convened, although the number of Christians had reached at that time to many millions; this historical fact can only be accounted for on the supposition that the episcopal office was changed from its primitive parochial to its modern diocesan form.

The *last* fact we shall assign against primitive diocesan episcopacy, is *the proximity of the ancient bishoprics to each other.* We frequently read of the bishops of Smyrna, Ephesus, Sardis, and many others, whose residence must have been very contiguous, not more, perhaps, than fifty miles distant; and Eusebius, lib. 7, c. 29, names sixteen "with other bishops who inhabited the bordering cities," who wrote an epistle to Rome and Alexandria. If these, then, were not

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bishops of parishes or congregations, is it not strange that in almost the very infancy of Christianity there should be so many hundreds, almost thousands, of episcopal sees, and many too of these within a few miles of each other, or in the same place, as in the cities of Ephesus and Philippi?

It is, however, very readily allowed, that some of the apostolic fathers make a distinction between presbyters and bishops; but this can easily be accounted for, without supposing them to have been two distinct orders. In the first century, the Christian assemblies were held in private houses; but as the believers increased, other societies, branches from the parent stock, were formed, over which presbyters were placed; yet the ministers, from whose congregation this scion originated, held over them a fostering and authoritative oversight. A number of these arising in the same city, or adjacent country, this senior presbyter was soon regarded as the overseer or bishop, not only of the congregations which sprung from his, but even over their ministers, so that, according to Ignatius, the subordinate presbyters were "not to baptize, to celebrate the holy communion, nor do any thing without the bishop," that is, this senior presbyter by whom these churches had been founded. From which it appears that, although every bishop was a presbyter, yet every presbyter was not a bishop; for, on account of the above reasons, the one acted in subordination to the other.

As to the succession, exhibiting catalogues of bishops from the apostles, it is an invention of later times; for Eusebius, who wrote about A. D. 312, begins by saying, "How many and what sincere followers have governed the church, planted by the apostles, it cannot be affirmed, but so far as may be gathered from the words of Paul." And Ireneus, who suffered martyrdom about 202, derives even this succession through the elders; lib. iv. cap. 43, he says, "Obey those presbyters in the church who have the succession, as we have shown, from the apostles, who, with the succession of the episcopate, received the gift of truth. But could this succession be made out, it would only trace diocesan bishops to bishops of parishes; these to bishops of single congregations; and bishops of a supposed superior order to bishops who never thought themselves more than the presiding presbyters, *primi inter pares*, the first among their equals. But it is also very evident that the apostles and evangelists, during their lives, held a spiritual dominion over elders, deacons and people; St. Paul, enumerating his sufferings, says, "Besides that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches;" and in his charge to Timothy, he tells him "to set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city." These instances afford sufficient evidence that the apostles had a general oversight of all Christian churches, and did not stand in the same relation to the whole Christian body that the

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primitive bishops did. But, as we have already seen, their extraordinary commission, with that of their assistants, the evangelists, ceased with their lives, after which the government of the church fell upon an order of men indiscriminately called presbyters or bishops. It is also the opinion of those best acquainted with antiquity, that at a very early period there arose a distinction between these, not only in name, but in rank and power. Although the intrinsic power of order, and, consequently, of ordination, was equally in presbyters as in bishops, yet the presbyters, in a very early age of Christianity, perceived that the promiscuous and individual exercise of this power was productive of confusion and schism. Hence, by mutual consent, this liberty was very early restrained, and was entrusted to the presidency of a bishop, superintendent, or president, with the concurrence and aid of the presbytery. In this way, a *third order of ministers, distinct from, and superior to, other presbyters*, both in extent of jurisdiction and executive authority, arose, *not by divine right*, but by the delegation of power from the body of elders with whom it had been previously lodged, and who only placed it in this new order of ministers for the more safe and efficient government of the church. We shall now conclude by considering

IV. THE HEAD WHO SUSTAINS AND GOVERNS THIS BODY.

In point of *dignity and authority*, the Scriptures declare Jesus Christ to be the supreme Head of the Christian church, uniting in himself all its real members throughout the world, giving to each spirit and sensation, and also upholding the whole by the word of his power. Even his humanity, in consequence of his mediatorial office and inexplicable union with the great Creator, is "in all things to have the pre-eminence," possessing the first rank and being chief in all the works of creation.

2. *Being the Head, Christ is the centre of all power.* Having redeemed those who compose his church from the dominion of sin, he destroys also in them the works of the devil. In the extension of his kingdom through the world, he shall strike through kings, overcome every barrier, and fill the whole earth with his power. In the accomplishment of this, he exercises his own prerogative in calling to the work of the ministry whomsoever he will: such only as he "moves by the Holy Ghost to take upon themselves that office," for it is not the taste of the people, pleasure of the parents or guardians, nor even our own views of honor or advantage, but the "Holy Ghost who can make men overseers of the church of God." It is an awful responsibility for any one to take this honor to himself. "But he who is called of God," no human science, no natural or acquired attainments, however elevated their character, can supersede this direct and especial call of God to the work. "Without me," says the Head

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of the church, "ye can do nothing;" without his commission, accompanying presence, and supernatural assistance, no sinner will be ever awakened, soul converted, or believer established. Christ calls none, without at least qualifying them to commence their work, nor should any thus called immure themselves within the precincts of a college, to acquire what human wisdom calls a prerequisite for the work, while souls are every where perishing for the lack of knowledge. If the Head of the church has called them to preach, they are disobedient, or arraying their notions of fitness against his positive command, if they are not in the field and at their work; and if they have not this call, they should never attempt by human means to get into the priest's office for a morsel of bread. To say that one is called, but must not commence until qualified by human means, is saying that the Holy Ghost calls those who are not fit for the work. Every profession has its definite object; that of the ministry of the gospel is, to bring mankind to an experimental acquaintance with Jesus Christ by the for giveness of sins, and the regeneration of our nature; now this can be done, is doing, and has been done in ten thousand instances by those who have never graduated at any seat of learning. It is, however, the imperious duty of every gospel minister, as the property of him who has called him to this honor, to exert every faculty, bending assiduously all his energies to grasp, if possible, the whole circle of science, that he might be more extensively useful in winning souls to God, and defending the great truths of the gospel; and much of this knowledge every minister in our church may acquire during the four or five years, before he is admitted to the full ministry or order of elders.

3. *He is also the seat of all wisdom in the church.* When Christ sent his disciples to preach his gospel to every creature, he charged them "to do all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" they had previously received their commission, and, as ambassadors, they had no authority to depart in the smallest particular from their instructions; they were not to consult the taste or disposition of any nation or people to whom they were sent, nor even to lean to their own understanding in the execution of their office. There is, therefore, in the Christian church, no such thing as "legislative power" in either the ministry or laity; Christ never committed the destiny of his church to the imperfect understanding of any man or body of men. All that any synod, conference or conclave has a right to do is simply to express what they believe to be the meaning of revelation on any point or article of faith. When the great King and Lawgiver had formed his code and established the institutions of his church, he clothed his ministers with only an executive authority to carry them into effect. From which it is evident, that every attempt to compare ecclesiastical with civil governments fails; between them there can be no analogy; they are wholly dissimilar in their origin, the authority

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they possess, and the design of their institution. The latter originates with the people; but the doctrines, laws and ordinances of the former emanate from one supreme and independent Head, which neither ministers nor people, nor both combined together, have any authority to change or modify.

When the apostles, in the execution of Christ's commands, received the first converts, they received them not to doubtful disputations about doctrines and governments, but simply to join with them on that form of sound words "which they had received from the Lord Jesus." In civil government the people are first in the order of time, after whom the constitution, officers and laws; but just the reverse in that of the church; the laws and institutions were established, and even the officers, apostles and ministers were all appointed before there was even one individual member in the Christian church. Therefore every comparison between them is at once deceptive and fallacious.

Is the church of Christ, then, a visible body of living spiritual members? Reader, art thou a member of that body? Visible fellowship with the Christian church is the imperious duty of all who possess faith in Christ; this visible fellowship and public profession are at least a part of our duty in acknowledging Christ before men, upon which so much stress is laid in the gospel. It is obligatory on all, publicly and frequently to partake of the Lord's supper, that they may testify their faith in Jesus; but this none can consistently do, unless they are united in some visible communion. It is equally a duty that every one should assist with his name, funds, and influence, in the promotion of the cause of Christ; but this can never be done without public profession and union with some branch of Christ's people. It is not optional with us whether we will submit to the government of Jesus Christ, or not; our relation to him makes it obligatory; if we are not for him, we are against him; there is no middle ground; there is no neutrality in religion. Visible fellowship, wherever it is possible, is an imperious duty on all; there can be no exemption; if it were allowed in one case, then, on the same principle, in ten thousand, and in this case, there would be no church, ministers, members, nor even Christianity on the face of the earth. I fear visible communion is not sufficiently considered; "it is not a small thing, it is for our life."

Is the church a visible, *spiritual body*, composed of members endowed with life? Are none united to Christ's mystical body, but such as have living faith? Reader, hast thou that life and faith which breathes to heaven in prayer and praise? And dost thou possess that spirit which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits? He is not a Christian, although he may be even a member of the visible church, who is only "one outwardly," but he must be one "inwardly, of the heart; not in the letter, but in the spirit." The whole universal or catholic church is called "holy,"

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because its members should be so, separate from sin and sinners; Christians are called "saints" in the New Testament, because they should be holy, separate from the maxims and follies of the world, and dedicated wholly to the service of God and his church.

Is the church also *a united body*, united in affection, disposition and destination? What a heinous sin, then, to make discord among brethren; to dismember the body of Christ, because all cannot see "eye to eye" in things not at all necessary to salvation; because one can not find a command for a particular ritual, nor discover in the Scriptures a certain form of church government. By making these, or other particulars, a test of communion, what infinite mischief have ministers, synods and national churches done to the cause of Christianity! "Although a difference in opinions and modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we may not think alike, may we not love alike? may we not be of one heart, though we may not be of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences." May we not say to every one whose heart God has changed, in the language of one belonging to a darker dispensation, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?....give me thine hand."

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A CHRISTIAN'S GRIEF.

BY WILLIAM C. BROWN.

To see his harp—once tuneful harp—
  On weeping willows hung;
Its tones of joy to sorrow changed,
  And all its chords unstrung:—
And then to hear the scoffer say,—
  "Now where's the Mighty Chief,
Strong to deliver and redeem?"—
  This is a Christian's grief.

To see the thoughtless sinner stand
  On ruin's slippery brink,
Assured that down the dreadful gulf
  His guilty soul must sink;
And yet, unmindful of the hand
  Stretched out to give relief—
The voice that fain would win him back;
  This is a Christian's grief.

To watch the strange misguided step
  Of him who once bid fair
To tread the hallowed courts on high,
  And dwell with angels there;
To think the heart that once made God
  Of all its joys the chief,
Should e'er forget a Saviour's love;—
  This is a Christian's grief.

To mark with tears—with aching hear',
  The ways of Zion mourn;
To see how few her feasts attend,
  How many wisdom spurn:—
To see her gates left desolate,
  And sin and unbelief
Their fearful, dreadful inroads make;—
  This is a Christian's grief.

But when his overwhelming grief
  Would seem almost despair,
"To lift the eye of faith to heaven,"
  And say, my Saviour's there;
This calms the anguish of his soul,
  This yields his heart relief,
Until through faith his heaven-born joy
  O'ercomes his wildest grief.

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